OCTOBER 1955

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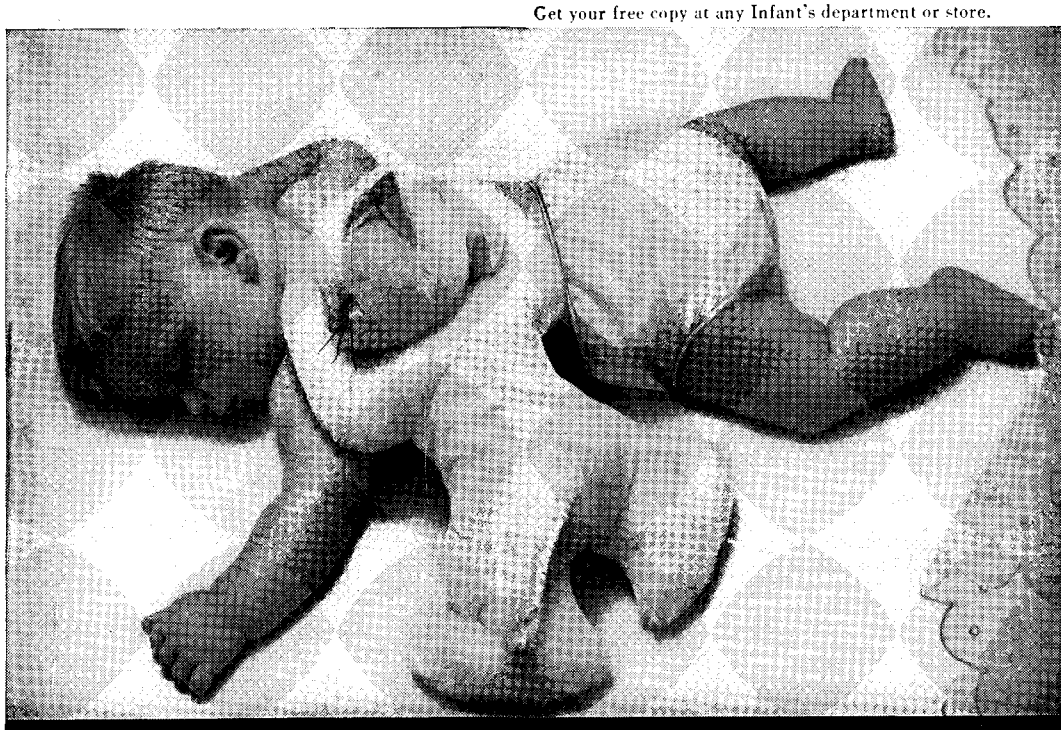

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

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The great activity of Jews in architecture, as both architects and builders, is a recent development. How it came about, and what it means, is the subject the co-authors attack.

A Young Israeli Poet *Herbert Howarth*

Mr. Howarth introduces to American readers a young Israeli poet who, though scarcely heard of outside Israel, already has to his credit a body of verse sufficient to stamp him as a leader in his country's literary culture.

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COMMENTARY

CHANGING ALIGNMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

How Basic Is the Israeli-Arab Conflict?

GEORGE LICHTHEIM

ON JULY 1, 1955, the Jerusalem *Post,* Israel's English-language daily, which frequently speaks with the voice of authority, printed a dispatch from its Paris correspondent forecasting closer relations between the Quai d'Orsay and the Israeli government: supposedly as a counter-stroke to certain Anglo-American maneuvers vis-à-vis the Arabs, unfavorable to France's position in the Middle East.

The attentive reader of this apparently well-informed account of what was stirring in French official quarters needed some grasp of such factors as Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism to follow the convolutions of the argument. He also had to have some inkling of rivalries within the Arab League, the impact of Arab nationalism on French North Africa, and the probable effect of the Turko-Iraqi pact in stimulating Pan-Islamic tendencies in Pakistan. Since Pakistan borders on India (strictly speaking there are two Pakistans, but let us ignore East Pakistan so as to make things look a little simpler than they are), he would also have to consider the manner in which the Indian government might be expected to react to (a) the strengthening of Pakistan's international position, and (b) the growing evidence that Pan-Islamism is not dead as a political factor. Let us stop at this point. India, we know, borders on the USSR and China, and at Pan-Asian gatherings some faint tremor registers the latest political shock in North Africa. But the world is round, and ruminations of this kind have the virtue of taking us back to our starting point.

IT REQUIRES no knowledge of official secrets to feel reasonably certain that the State Department, like the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay, has its share of global strategists. Whether they are as clear-headed and systematic as their French colleagues in discriminating between Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism is perhaps open to question. The French are better at this kind of thinking, one precondition of which is a certain intellectual ruthlessness uncommon in the Anglo-American world. To the French (and,

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FROM North Africa to Iran and Pakistan, the Islamic world is stirring with political unrest often linked with the East-West struggle, but essentially independent of the issues made familiar by the terms "cold war" and "co-existence." Insofar as Israel forms part of the Middle East, her political fortunes are bound up with those of the area. In this article, GEORGE LICHTHEIM discusses the cross-currents that divide the states of the Arab League and tend to make secondary the apparently irreconcilable conflict with Israel. Mr. Lichtheim, who now makes his home in London, lived in Jerusalem from 1934 to 1945. He is a frequent contributor to our pages.

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it may be added, the Israelis) it is evident that the Arabs cannot have it both ways, and that if their leaders opt for Pan-Islamism they are taking a step away from nationalism in its relatively modern, liberal, pro-Western form. The reason is that all those personalities, groups, and movements in the Arab-speaking world who stand for modernization are openly or secretly hostile to Islamic orthodoxy. This is as true of the ruling junta in Cairo (though they deny it) as of a genuine liberal like Habib Bourguiba, with whom the French have recently made what looks like a lasting compact in Tunisia. Beyond the Arab-speaking world, it is of course doubly true of those Turks who have inherited the Kemalist tradition and are now struggling to limit the currently fashionable revival of Islamic conservatism. All these forces are actually or potentially pro-Western, in the fundamental sense that they are attracted by Western culture even where they are engaged in a political struggle against remnants of former imperial domination. It was this curious *ambiance* that made the Tunisian compromise possible.

Conversely, the absence of such Western sympathies lends an extra edge of fanaticism to national animosities. "It is no accident," as they say in Moscow, that the obscurantist Moslem Brotherhood regards a man like Bourguiba as a traitor. The fact that he has won home rule for Tunisia means nothing to the embattled Pan-Islamist. What counts is the contagion of the hated Western civilization (Bourguiba has married a Frenchwoman and speaks better French than Arabic). What shall it profit Arab nationalism (or Turkish, or Persian) to gain its secular ends, if in the process it abandons its religious heritage? (Similar complaints can occasionally be heard in Israel too.)

It is tempting to dismiss such issues as politically irrelevant. Tempting but foolish. In the Middle East, religion *is* politics. The fact that Kemal broke with Islam made possible the modernization of the Turkish Republic. The fact that the Tunisian nationalist movement was led by Westernized liberals made the compromise with France possible. The fact that the Middle Eastern ruling classes, by and large, are hostile to radical Westernization is the biggest single element in the growth of Communism among rebellious intellectuals. If the present dictatorial regime in Egypt is overthrown, it will owe its discomfiture largely to the hostility of the Moslem Brotherhood; and the proved political incapacity of that reactionary movement will mean a partial revival of the old regime, the establishment of conservatism under the presidency of General Naguib or someone like him, confusion on the present Syrian pattern, and an even faster growth of Communism by way of reaction. All these conflicting tendencies turn on the so-called "religious" issue, which is not "religious" in the Western sense at all, but social and cultural.

FAILURE to bear this background in mind makes Middle Eastern politics seem unduly mysterious, or else confusing to the point of absurdity. The endless round of crises that resolve nothing, *coups d'état* in a social vacuum, and alliances between nonexistent armies to fight imaginary enemies, seem fit only for musical comedy. Yet these antics take place within the world's main oil-producing area, and every now and then they erupt into bloody conflict. From Morocco to Pakistan, Islamic society is in travail, and if the outward expression of the trouble is frequently odd and farcical, there is nothing funny about the issues at stake.

For an illustration, let us take the Turko-Iraqi defense pact signed in Baghdad on February 24, to which Pakistan subsequently adhered, and of which Britain has since become a member. A certain element of oddity was certainly not lacking in the preliminaries leading up to this agreement. Thus it was reliably said in Baghdad that the British Embassy, which is popularly supposed to sponsor every move in Iraqi politics, got one of its biggest surprises when, on January 13, a communiqué at the end of the first round of Turko-Iraqi conversations announced the two governments' readiness to proceed to a mutual defense pact. Less re-

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liably, but still quite plausibly, it was added that the Turkish prime minister had brought with him to Baghdad, in addition to his usual retinue, a Circassian lady of considerable personal aplomb and eight dancing girls, and that the record speed with which the Iraqi foreign ministry's political scruples were overcome had much to do with the presence of these attractive delegates. True or not, Iraq subsequently signed the pact, thus (according to Cairo) disrupting the unity of the Arab League; whereupon the British government, having been kept wholly in the dark about what was brewing, solemnly announced (on March 30) that it would "accede to" the defense agreement between the two Middle Eastern states. Since Pakistan has now also joined, and Iran is being invited to follow suit, all the major elements of a Middle Eastern defense system appear to be present, and the scandalous circumstances allegedly surrounding the Baghdad talks last January are fast receding into the limbo of diplomatic gossip.

But when this chain of serio-comic events is considered against the background of Middle Eastern politics since 1945, a somewhat different pattern emerges, and one gets a glimpse of forces making for what the professionals call "instability" in the area. The constitution of the Arab League, ratified in March 1945, did not preclude treaties with non-Arab states, and indeed by 1947 the Nuri government in Baghdad had become so alarmed by Soviet penetration in Iran, near Iraq's northern frontier, that it concluded a treaty of friendship with Turkey and pushed it through the Iraqi parliament despite the resistance of the Pan-Arab nationalists. Egypt, then still under Farouk but already in the grip of Pan-Arabism, responded by successfully inciting nationalist opinion in Baghdad against the abortive Anglo-Iraqi treaty of January 1948. Thus the political storm in Cairo which greeted the Turko-Iraqi defense pact last spring had its predecessor seven years earlier. In the words of an authoritative British commentator writing in the Chatham House journal, the *World Today* (April 1955), ". . . since that time it has been an item of reproach in Pan-Arab circles that Iraq's successive Governments have shown less zeal than those of Egypt in shaking off the alliance with Britain. *The survival of the Crown and its constitutional influence in Iraq* [my italics] is also regarded by Arab 'progressives' as a 'reactionary' feature of Iraqi political life, not least since Egypt 'chose freedom' by the proclamation of the Republic in 1953."

It is not often that the issue which torments all concerned is stated quite so plainly. "The survival of the Crown and its constitutional influence in Iraq" is a polite formula to describe the whole complex of archaic political, social, and religious arrangements that prevent the Arab middle class from wresting power from the landowners who, in Iraq as elsewhere, are the mainstay of the British connection. To call the government of Nuri es-Said a "dictatorship," as is sometimes done by journalists, is a misuse of the term. Together with its offshoot in Jordan, it represents something a great deal more traditional, namely, an uneasy alliance of the landed oligarchy, the army, and the clergy, under the aegis of the Crown, to ward off the modern world. The Crown, i.e. the maintenance of the Hashemite dynasty, is the visible outward symbol of the fact that the regime relies on Britain without whose support it could not maintain itself against the Pan-Arab nationalists with their middle-class following. Here the interplay of political and social factors can be studied in a nutshell. In principle, of course, Iraq could become a republic on the Pakistani model and still retain the British connection; but the present conservative setup certainly suits the British, the more so since any republican successor regime would probably discover overnight that it had a great deal in common with the United States.

Let us turn back from the underlying issue to the surface of the political quagmire. How does the new defense alignment look in terms of conventional diplomacy, and how is Israel affected by the apparent tendency in Washington and London to build

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on the "Northern Tier"—Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan—while bypassing Egypt and the Levant?

"It has to be remembered," says the writer already quoted from the April 1955 number of the *World Today*, ". . . that the Arab League, in the form which it took in 1945, was superimposed by Egypt upon a project which Nuri [i.e. General Nuri es-Said, the all but perpetual prime minister of Iraq] had put out two years earlier for a close union of Iraq and the Arab States still under mandate to Britain and France, and for a looser association of this 'Fertile Crescent' unit with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In the years that followed the formation of the Arab League, Nuri did not fail to push his project whenever the chronic political instability of Syria or the chronic financial precariousness of Jordan offered an opportunity. Egypt and Saudi Arabia were violently opposed to such a scheme, which would have strengthened Iraq to their disadvantage; and the Arab League collective security pact of 1950 was designed by Egypt not merely against Israel, but also against any such initiatives on the part of one or more member States. A vote by a two-thirds majority of the defense council was to be binding on all members, and Article 10 bound all members 'not to conclude international agreements inconsistent with the present pact, and in their relations with other Powers not to adopt an attitude incompatible with the objects of the present pact,' *viz.* Arab solidarity."

This was the agreement from which Baghdad broke loose last January-February, when it concluded the bilateral military deal with Turkey. There had been some warnings of what was coming: when Turkey and Pakistan concluded a defense pact in February 1954 there were rumors that Iraq might join, whereupon the controlled Egyptian press burst into violent denunciations of the Iraqi government. The point about this campaign, which reached a fresh pitch after the signing of the Turko-Iraqi pact a year later, is that it was aimed at the nationalist middle class of Baghdad, the mainstay of Pan-Arabism, which as a movement consequently took on an anti-monarchical flavor. Our author is discreet on this point: "Demonstrations against Turkey and Iraq," he says, "were incited in Syria and Lebanon by Left-wingers and Pan-Arab nationalists in collusion, and there were the usual casualties sustained at police hands by the students who are the devoted cannon-fodder of political extremism in the Middle East." In other words, the Communists had climbed on the bandwagon, with the tacit approval of the Egyptian government, which was financing the demonstrations.

The reference is to what happened in February 1954, when Egypt was still wrangling with the British over the evacuation of the Suez Canal zone, and denouncing as a betrayal of Arab solidarity any move by a fellow member of the Arab League to enter a defense agreement with the West. But a year later, when agreement between Britain and Egypt had at long last been reached and this particular argument could no longer be employed, the controlled Cairo press and radio were no less furious in their denunciation of Nuri es-Said as a "British tool." This suggests that the earlier rage was not just evoked by bad timing on Iraq's part. In fact, of course, the junta in Cairo felt that it had been bypassed—Iraq, not Egypt, was becoming the linch-pin of Middle Eastern defense arrangements. The reaction in Cairo was a redoubled burst of Pan-Arab propaganda against the "traitors" in Baghdad, and when this produced no results, Colonel Nasser in person went to Bandung and publicly threw in his lot with the neutralists at that gathering, even going so far as to strike up a kind of friendship with Chou En-lai (who repaid the flattering attention bestowed on him by voting for the Arab-sponsored resolution on "Palestine"). Then he hurried back to Cairo, to resume the struggle against the Turko-Iraqi "axis." As late as July Nasser was telling a British correspondent (see the *Daily Telegraph*, London, July 11) that the pact between these two countries was a source of disunity in the Middle East.

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But did the Turko-Iraqi pact, and the subsequent Anglo-Iraqi agreement, which so upset Colonel Nasser in Cairo, at least contribute to the popularity of General Nuri in Baghdad? By all the orthodox canons it ought to have done so. Alliance with Turkey, the only noteworthy military power in the area, certainly flattered Iraqi self-esteem, and incidentally made it less likely that the Turks would try to grab the oil-bearing Mosul region from Iraq. The agreement with Britain of March 30, 1955, did more: it cancelled the 1930 "Treaty of Alliance" under which Britain was allowed to maintain air bases in Iraq. The British air force was to be evacuated within a year of the agreement's signing, and the Iraqi flag now flies over the outposts of Habbaniya airfield. The old treaty was for twenty-five years, the new one is only for five. Under its terms the British will train the Iraqi forces, which are now to be equipped with American arms. The arms budget has reached the impressive level, for a poor country of five million inhabitants, of over 200 million dollars, and the oil companies are footing the bill, in the form of bigger royalties for the Iraqi national treasury.

No wonder a writer in the May issue of *Middle East Affairs* (published by the Council for Middle Eastern Affairs in New York) concludes that "Nuri es-Said was able to deliver the goods—to offer Iraq the counterpart of Nasser's achievement in Egypt." This ignores the vital point: Nuri is the spokesman of the landed oligarchy and its political apex, the Hashemite dynasty, against whom Cairo (and Moscow) can turn the thunders of middle-class Arab nationalism *plus* left-wing radicalism. As long as this regime is in power, the discontented middle class of Baghdad, the radical intelligentsia, and the mob will continue to rail against their country's Anglo-American connection. They would of course rail all the more loudly—*vide* Syria—if Iraq were to become a parliamentary republic with a tolerated Popular Front, instead of being what it is, namely, an authoritarian monarchy where genuine political opposition is not permitted. To that extent the Nuri government is being perfectly realistic: it can always tell its critics, who demand greater political liberty, to take a look at what is happening next door in Syria. This reasoning seems to have convinced the State Department, as it long ago convinced the British Foreign Office. The combination of an unpopular dynasty, a narrow oligarchy, and a handful of foreign oil companies may not look very good to liberals, but it is after all preferable to "anarchy."

Among those who took umbrage at the Turko-Iraqi pact, and Britain's adherence thereto, was the Israeli government, though for reasons different from those actuating the Cairo junta. Superficially at least there was cause for resentment: the exchange of letters appended to the treaty made some mention of "Palestine," and Nuri stressed that its signatories would henceforth shoulder the responsibility for the 1947 UN resolutions on "Palestine," which everyone knows to be a dead letter but which Arab propagandists like to trot out on suitable occasions. The Turkish prime minister's agreement to this constituted a novelty inasmuch as Turkey had hitherto carefully refrained from supporting Arab claims against Israel. Here, too, it is impossible to abstract from the underlying pull between modernizing and retrograde tendencies in the Middle East: since 1950, when Kemal's closest collaborators went out of office, there has been something like a conservative revival in Turkey, though within the bounds set by the Kemalist tradition. The provincial middle class that now sets the tone in Turkey has gone some way to revive Islamic customs, and is willing to flatter Pan-Islamic sentiment by aligning itself (on paper anyhow) with the Arab states against Israel.

But the real effect of the Turko-Iraqi alliance, after all, is to pull Iraq away from its Arab League associations and towards Iran and Pakistan, neither of whom is interested in "Palestine." Conversely, while Egypt and Israel, for different reasons, both reacted sharply against the new alignment, their own relations promptly took a turn for the

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worse. In this perspective Israel began to appear as a Levant state which had been bypassed by the new Anglo-American policy of reliance on the "Northern Tier," and Egypt—as another Levant state in the same predicament, though rather bigger and more unwieldy. That the two, instead of making peace, should immediately begin to hack away at each other's positions along the Gaza frontier, without any sign of either Turkey's or Iraq's taking an interest, might be regarded as characteristic of a situation where words frequently do not quite fit the facts.

To complete the picture, the British government—having learned too late that Turkey, Iraq, and Pakistan were about to get married under discreet American sponsorship—hurriedly bestowed its blessings on the proposed union and asked to be accepted as a fourth. This slightly incestuous partnership having been consummated, Sir Anthony Eden informed worried Labor party questioners in the House of Commons that British policy towards Israel remained unchanged. "We are not associating ourselves with the letters that were exchanged . . . on the subject of Palestine." To further questions about the possibility of a bilateral defense pact between Britain and Israel, Eden replied: "May I say that when we join an arrangement in an area we do not join to make the maximum amount of trouble in that area. . . . We do not think it necessary to make an immediate treaty with Israel, nor did they [the Labor government when in office] when they made their treaty with Jordan."

A treaty with Israel is now an official Labor party demand, though the emphasis is on the need to "balance" Britain's relations with Iraq and Jordan. To this the Tories tend to reply that "friendship" with Israel will become easier when Israel has made suitable concessions to Britain's protégé, Jordan, if not to Egypt. In fact, Eden dropped some hints of this kind, only to be rebuffed with considerable energy by Ben Gurion in an interview with a British correspondent (London *Sunday Times*, May 1, 1955).

The sequel to this episode has already been noted: rebuffed by Britain, and uneasy over the development of American policy, Israeli opinion sought comfort in French reactions to the Middle Eastern line-up. These reactions were easily predictable: France is primarily interested in North Africa, and secondarily in the independence of Syria and Lebanon. The inclusion of these two Levant republics in the orbit of the Turko-Iraqi-Pakistani pact—by way of Baghdad's "Fertile Crescent" scheme for linking Iraq with Syria and Jordan—would complete the eviction of France from the Levant. Paris has consequently supported the ruling republican, i.e. nationalist and anti-Hashemite, clique in Syria, while turning a blind eye to its frequent noisy assertions of sympathy with Pan-Arabism in North Africa. But Syria is so unstable and faction-torn (with the Communists all the time gaining ground at the expense of their potential partners in a Popular Front) that it is tempting for Paris to keep a line open to Israel as well, despite the bad blood between her and Syria.

At this point the "Mediterranean" pull enters into conflict with the ambition of some Israeli policy-makers to effect that "integration into the Middle East" which has obstinately eluded them ever since the Independence proclamation of 1948. One's guess is that eventually the Israelis will have to come off the fence and opt for the Mediterranean. After all, Paris, Rome, and Athens mean more to the younger generation of Israelis than do Ankara, Baghdad, and Karachi.

THE image of the Middle East as a region where nothing is what it seems, where wise men bring their beards to bear on a conundrum, and where the simplest transaction is traditionally wrapped up in convoluted mazes of chicanery, has long exercised a peculiar fascination upon the minds of Western observers. Traces of this "mysterious East" approach can be glimpsed even in the writings of the most hard-headed geopoliticians. When this tradition mingles

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with the equally deep-rooted belief in the occult wealth and power of the Jews, one gets such surprising bits of political romancing as the following passage from Halford Hoskins's important and authoritative work, *The Middle East* (published by the Royal Institute of International affairs, 2nd edition, 1954):

> In the third year of World War I a group of British Zionists, among them Chaim Weizmann, subsequently the first president of the Republic of Israel, offered to underwrite a substantial loan to the exhausted British Government in consideration of official support for a long-standing Jewish repatriation project in Palestine. The overture was successful. On November 2, 1917, Lord Balfour addressed to Lord Rothschild, of banking fame, a communication probably as fateful as any in modern times. . . ., etc., etc.

Apart from its naivety this surprising piece of fiction is chiefly noteworthy for its bland disavowal of another equally popular bit of "inside information" current at the time: the British government, one was given to understand, had acted from a desire to keep the "influential Jewish community in Russia" on the side of the Western Allies. If that was true, the moment was certainly not well chosen. This second "explanation," however, did at least impinge upon reality at one point: the Zionist movement was primarily an East European one; in fact, it was part of what a British historian, H. Seton-Watson, subsequently called the "East European Revolution," in consequence of which the various successor states came into being in 1919. The fact that official Zionist spokesmen have never quite accepted this view, preferring to dwell upon the uniqueness of the national revelation vouchsafed to them, does not detract from its significance. At present, of course, Israel is fast becoming a semi-Oriental country in consequence of mass immigration from Middle Eastern and North African areas, and to that extent it is now easier to visualize an eventual understanding with some, at least, of her neighboring Arab countries. But the hard core of Israel is, or was, European—to be exact, East and East-Central European, which is why the perpetuation of British colonial rule proved impossible in 1945-48. For that type of government, whatever its virtues, did not make provision for a European nationalism.

The point of recalling these familiar facts here is to emphasize that British policy in the area once known as "Palestine" is not as irrational and retrograde as its critics sometimes seem to suppose. The British are well aware that Israel, like Turkey, is too European to fit into a purely Middle Eastern framework. (Turkey, it should be remembered, is in NATO and therefore counts officially as an "Atlantic" country.) The distinction is given due weight in the preface to the above-cited *The Middle East*:

> The countries here surveyed are of three kinds. A few are of European complexion and frame their policy, particularly foreign policy, in the light of world affairs in general and of the cold war in particular. One such country is Turkey, which by a process of forcible evolution under a dictatorship has attained a two-party system and unanimously and cheerfully belongs to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Israel, another country of the same kind, is rather differently placed. . . .
>
> At the other scale are the Middle Eastern countries that still preserve a feudal regime based on ancient custom. These are Saudi Arabia, the Yemen, and the Shaikhdoms of the Persian Gulf. . . .
>
> Between these two extremes is a group of countries that is suffering from serious political and social growing pains. Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Persia, and to a smaller extent the more sophisticated Lebanon, belong to this category.

This analysis is a good deal more realistic than the customary juxtaposition of "Israel" and "the Arab League," to say nothing of the familiar romancing about the "three hundred million Moslems" (most of whom were officially committed to the neutralist Bandung resolution last April). It is perhaps open to question, though, whether a different classification might not in time arise from the apparent rift between Levant republics (including Egypt) and the "continental" group of states farther east (including Turkey). Given peace between Egypt and Israel—admittedly an improbable assump-

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tion at the moment—the whole Arab-Israeli complex which so worries Mr. Hoskins and his friends might turn out to be a minor problem. The point here is that, with every year that passes, *the conflict between Israel and its neighbors tends to merge into the general pattern of Middle Eastern relationships*. In this pattern, rivalry and even hostility among neighboring countries, so far from being "fateful" or "tragic," is the normal thing. Israel has not been accepted on these terms—yet. But in the end she probably will be, and in the meantime the whole issue is slowly becoming less central to the real concerns of Middle Eastern statesmanship.

Were it not for the success of the Arab League fanatics in keeping the refugee issue artificially alive by preventing the resettlement of these hapless people, this gradual shift of attention would already have become quite noticeable. Egypt, for example, is vitally concerned with the future of the Sudan (because of the dispute over the utilization of Nile water), whereas the wretched Gaza enclave, which constantly makes the headlines of the world's press, on any rational view of Egyptian interests, is nothing but a squalid distraction from the country's real problems. Iraq, the second most important Arab country, has no frontier with Israel and keeps up a meaningless pretense of being concerned with what in fact does not concern it. Saudi Arabia, although the size of India, is still too backward to count; as for the Levant republics, no one seriously supposes that they are anxious for a "second round."

A GROWING conviction that the whole Arab-Israeli complex is becoming marginal to the major problems of the region appears to underlie the development of British policy in recent years. In the perspective set up by British political and defense arrangements, now that "cold war" and "coexistence" are becoming synonymous, Israel does not loom much larger than Cyprus, where the recent "trouble" points to the likelihood of a compromise arrangement associating Greece and Turkey with the defense of the island. Whether or not a bilateral Anglo-Israeli pact can be worked into the pattern of Britain's relationships with the Arab states is an interesting but, from the British viewpoint, distinctly minor question. A certain disillusionment is characteristic of all present-day British thinking about the Middle East, and it may be that we shall in future have to look elsewhere for those large and ambitious schemes for regional development and control which in 1945-48 took up so much of Ernest Bevin's energy, and did so much to distract public attention from the more valuable aspects of his work. On balance, informed British observers would probably agree with their most recent American critic that

> Great Britain in recent years has been in no position to supply what has been lacking in American foreign policy. With the loss of control over the Indian subcontinent and the relinquishing of one position of vantage after another in the Middle East, culminating in the loss of a large measure of initiative to the United States, British Middle Eastern policy has been halting and unsure (Hoskins, *op. cit.*).

Where they might differ is in their assessment of the steps already taken by the United States to build up a new American-controlled system. This issue, however, lies beyond the field of our present observations. American policy, for better or for worse, takes in the whole area from Morocco to Pakistan, whereas the British have always had to content themselves with manipulating the political factors in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East proper. French North Africa has been outside their province, while Persia was a buffer between Russia and the now defunct Indian Empire; Pakistan of course did not exist, and Turkey was never in the British-controlled orbit after Kemal (with Russian and French backing) had defeated Britain's Greek protégés. It is indeed the peculiarity of the present American position that for the first time a single Western power—for, of course, the Ottomans were there before—is trying to shape the destinies of the whole vast group of countries from Northwestern Africa down to the Indian Ocean. The experiment is certainly well worth watching.

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OUR BROKEN PROMISE TO THE REFUGEES

Unsmiling Goddess of Liberty

JAMES RORTY

"I KIND of feel," said Senator Hubert Humphrey, "that if we amend this act, the Statue of Liberty—the Goddess of Liberty—may get a smile on her face."

Since at that moment (June 1955) the mail of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee before which he spoke was running twenty to one against *any* liberalization of the Refugee Relief Act, the Senator was obviously expressing a hope rather than a conviction. The same afternoon the committee listened to Mrs. Ernest W. Howard, representing the Wheel of Progress and the Women's Patriotic Conference. They heard her deliver a xenophobic tirade calculated to make quite impossible any such benign transformation of Bartholdi's grave goddess, and even to snuff out her wavering torch—to which, because of its structural infirmity, tourists have long been forbidden to climb.

Earlier, representatives of the two principal veterans' organizations had testified in somewhat similar vein, although more temperately. So pessimistic was the atmosphere of the hearings that even the able and liberal Roland Elliot, director of Church World Service, one of the principal voluntary agencies cooperating with the refugee program, seemed convinced of the political impossibility of liberalizing the Act; in fact, with an election year approaching, he considered it dangerous even to try. More could be accomplished, he suggested, by taking advantage of the broadened and more flexible administrative interpretations of the Act which were adopted some months before the President, in the aftermath of the Corsi affair, called for its amendment.

It was evident, too, that Mr. Elliot's apprehensions were shared by Senator Arthur V. Watkins of Utah, author of the Refugee Relief Act and of an administration bill amending it in line with the President's recommendations. Senator Watkins repeatedly expressed his fear of again arousing the nativist opposition in Congress, which had written impossibly restrictive security and sponsorship provisions into his original bill, and which, the year before, had passed the McCarran-Walter Act over President Truman's veto.

In its final form the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 provided a token redemption of the administration's pre-election promises to the religious, labor, civic, and nationality groups anxious to see a more liberal immigration policy prevail, while evading the ordeal of dealing forthrightly with the McCarran-Walter Act. Both Mr. Eisenhower and his Democratic opponents had repeatedly denounced the disastrous inequities, injustices, and obstructions embodied in our basic immigration law. But neither party was politically willing or able to legislate a statesmanlike immigration policy, or even, as it turned out, to pass an effective emergency palliative. Instead, what we were given in the Refugee Relief Act was "in many respects the most discriminatory, the most restrictive, and generally the worst piece of legislation on the subject ever enacted in the history of the nation."

The characterization is by Philip Perlman, former Solicitor General of the United

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THE McCarran-Walter Act having proved notoriously unjust and inadequate in coping with the problem of refugees from behind the Iron Curtain, the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 was passed as an emergency palliative—with the results here described by JAMES RORTY. Mr. Rorty is the veteran journalist whose writings appear frequently in COMMENTARY. His most recent contribution was "The Libraries in a Time of Tension" (July).

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States and chairman of President Truman's Commission on Naturalization and Immigration. The defects that Mr. Perlman observed at the time of its passage and that were abundantly manifested by subsequent experience with the operation of the Act, are evident in its major provisions. It calls for the issuance, over a period of three years and five months, of some 214,000 American visas to "expellees," "escapees," and "refugees" residing within the continental limits of the NATO countries and in Turkey, Sweden, Iran, and the Free Territory of Trieste; also to persons of Italian, Greek, and Dutch "ethnic origin" who are relatives of American citizens or the spouses or minor children of lawfully admitted immigrant aliens.*

The definitions of all these terms, as well as the onerous requirements for assurances of employment and housing by individual employers, were such as to insure in advance a maximum of difficulty, delay, and inequity in the issuance of visas. But to make obstruction doubly sure, the security provisions of the Act were (in the words of its administrator, Scott MacLeod, used in a letter dated July 28, 1953, to Representative Patrick J. Hillings of California) "stronger than under any present or former immigration laws. Any doubt that may exist will be resolved against the applicant and in favor of the United States." Especially onerous was the provision that no person might be issued a visa "unless complete information shall be available regarding the history of such person covering the period of at least two years immediately preceding his application." Since no such information could be obtained from behind the Iron Curtain, this meant that in practice most refugees would have to wait two years before obtaining visas.

The House version of the bill was passed by a vote of 221 to 185, with 132 Republicans and 88 Democrats supporting, and 74 Republicans and 111 Democrats opposing. In the Senate, 38 Republicans and 24 Democrats—all but two from the South—voted against it.

THUS the administration was in a position to claim a partial fulfillment of its preelection promises on immigration. By implication, at least, Senator Watkins made this claim when he urged the President not to support the liberal, enlightened Lehman bill, which would have replaced the McCarran-Walter Act, on the ground that Senator Lehman was trying "to offset, if possible, the advantage the Republicans have gained during the present session on the subject."

The "advantage," if it was that, was gained over the determined opposition of Senator Patrick McCarran and Representative Francis E. Walter. It was Representative Walter who, in the House, presented security and sponsorship amendments so obstructive as almost to defeat in advance the purposes of the Act. And it was the late Senator McCarran who on this occasion quoted a poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a 19th-century Hearst laureate whom most Americans have happily forgotten:

Columbia, large-hearted and tender,
Too long for the good of your kin
You have shared your home's comfort and splendor
With all who have asked to come in. . . .
Your overrun proud sister nations,
Whose offspring you help them to keep,
Are sending their poorest relations
Their unruly, vicious black sheep. . . .
Shall aliens born over the ocean
Dispute us the fruits of our toil?
Most noble, and gracious of mothers
Your children rise up and demand

*Amendments to the Refugee Relief Act, which became effective on August 31, 1954, permitted visas allotted to refugees of Italian, Greek, and Dutch origin to be used by Italian, Dutch, and Greek relatives respectively, and vice versa, thereby making the original quota allocation for refugees and relatives available interchangeably to both classes of aliens. This facilitated greatly the movement of relatives without lowering the obstructions encountered by the refugees whom the Act was originally designed to benefit. Thus, by July 15, 1955, Mr. MacLeod had reported the arrival of a total of 28,729 immigrants, of whom only 7,300 were refugees.

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That you bring us no more foster brothers
To breed discontent in the land. . . .
It is time that your wardens were rallied
And stationed outside the locked door.

IF THE Refugee Relief Act of 1953 was designed to take the heat off the McCarran-Walter Act, then by the same token the appointment in December of 1953 of Edward Corsi as a special assistant to Secretary Dulles *and* to Scott MacLeod, represented a renewed attempt to placate the groups that had been demanding a more liberal immigration policy. By this time the latter, along with the voluntary agencies charged with the task of obtaining individual assurances of employment and housing for prospective immigrants, were convinced that they had been sold out, both by the Act itself and by its administration under Scott MacLeod.

Mr. Corsi has described, on the lecture platform and in print,* his service as a burnt-offering on the altar of his party's broken promises. In December of 1954 he was given an indeterminate appointment as consultant to the Secretary of State and assistant to Scott MacLeod in the administration of the Refugee Relief Act. Obviously, the political purpose of this appointment, which Mr. MacLeod has said that he himself had suggested to the Secretary, was to demonstrate to the country the administration's desire to make the Refugee Act work. Corsi's fault, from the administration's point of view, would appear to have been that he tried seriously to make it work. To that end he used his long experience with immigration problems and his old friendships with foreign officials to break bottlenecks and speed up procedures. He called for administrative interpretations and substantive changes in the Act for which the voluntary agencies had long been pleading, and which conceivably, if obtained, might have made it work. And when he found his labors obstructed by Representative Walter, who smeared him with demonstrably false charges of past pro-Communist activities, he was rash enough to fight back.

Seemingly, his final sin as a loyal and expendable Republican immigration expert was his refusal to accept the mild sentence of silence and exile to South America—Walter had demanded his head—which his friend Secretary Dulles had decreed. Instead, Mr. Corsi resigned from the State Department with an explosive public statement designed to refute and expose all soothing administration statements about how well the Refugee Relief Act was working.

It wasn't working, said Corsi. Eighteen months after its enactment, and with only two more years to run, less than 25,000 visas had been issued and *less than a thousand of the 214,000 refugees authorized by the Act had actually been admitted to the country.*† Moreover, the failure to bring in anything like the authorized quota of refugees was due not alone to the restrictive clauses which the foes of immigration had inserted in the Act, but to needless delays in establishing the machinery of security clearance, and to administrative interpretations that needlessly handicapped the voluntary agencies in obtaining assurances of employment and housing.

Corsi had encountered these and other obstructions at first hand when he toured European immigration centers under the chaperonage of two of Mr. MacLeod's assistants, one of them a former Texas Ranger. Some of the consular service officers he interviewed were scared and reticent; others were openly hostile to the "security gang," whom they charged with obstructing the program.

"What are you doing with these flatfeet?" asked the supervising consul general in

*"My Ninety Days In Washington," *The Reporter,* May 5, 1955.

†Corsi's protest resulted in a considerable speed-up of administrative procedures, so that on July 9, 1955, Mr. MacLeod and his new deputy, Pierce J. Gerety, were able to announce the arrival of the first refugee ship containing 1,200 immigrants. The rate of visa issuance, said Mr. MacLeod, had been doubled, and 131,529 applicants were "in the pipeline"—that is to say, being processed for visas.

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Bonn. "You're not really planning to waste your time on this project, are you? As for these characters and their boss back home, we're sick and tired of seeing them around here."

In the same city Corsi listened to the representatives of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration deny violently that people in Germany did not want to emigrate to America and declare that the German Minister of Refugees would confirm this denial. Arrangements were made for Corsi to interview the Minister, but behind his back his security escorts canceled the appointment.

DESPITE these and other obstructions, Corsi became convinced that, bad as it was, the Act could be made to work if its administrators really wanted it to. In Italy he persuaded the government to set up provincial committees for the expediting of visas. On his return to this country, he was assured of cooperation by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers, as well as by leading employers, including Spyros Skouras, president of Twentieth Century-Fox, and Fortune Pope, head of the Colonial Sand and Stone Company, who offered to organize Italian and Greek committees to promote the issuance of assurances. With these and other evidences of support in hand, Mr. Corsi then proceeded to write an optimistic report to Secretary Dulles, which the latter was rumored to have read and considered excellent.

Then came the Walter attack, followed by MacLeod's statement that, regrettably, Corsi's security clearance had not come through. To his surprise, Corsi learned that his appointment had been for ninety days only, and that Secretary Dulles now wished him to undertake "a very important assignment to South America." Administrative advisers registered shock and distress at this development and for a day or two Corsi hoped that he might be given a chance to state his case at the summit. By the President's press secretary he was assured that the White House was deeply concerned with his troubles and would call him back; the call never came.

Forced to choose between political exile and an open noisy break with the leaders of his party, Mr. Corsi decided that only by such a break could he serve the objective of the liberalized immigration policy to which he had dedicated his career. Subsequent developments soon proved him right. During the weeks that followed Corsi's refusal of the South American appointment and Secretary Dulles's discovery that he was "not qualified" to be an administrative executive of the Refugee Relief Act, MacLeod's office promulgated many of the procedural reforms and relaxations which both Corsi and the voluntary agencies had long been demanding. And on May 27, 1955, the President sent a memorandum to Congress proposing a dozen substantive amendments which, if passed, might conceivably have let in at least a large part of the 214,000 immigrants called for by the Act.

ALL of these amendments had been repeatedly urged by the directors of the voluntary agencies on which rested the burden of securing assurances of employment for prospective immigrants. In brief, they provided:

—That the definition of "refugee" be broadened to include all escapees and expellees and that it be interpreted so as not to exclude, as it frequently had in the past, some of the most desirable of the refugees applying for visas.

—That people who have become "refugees" in their own countries, as for example flooded-out Dutch farmers and Greek victims of Communist border raids, be brought within the scope of the Act.

—That the Attorney General be permitted to waive, in special cases, the provisions of the Act that have been used to deport political refugees in this country to the "people's democracies," and that the passport requirement be waived at the discretion of the State and Justice departments.

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—That the two-year political history requirement be revoked and the granting or withholding of visas on security grounds be left to the discretion of the consular authorities.
—That the requirement for individual sponsorship of immigrants be revoked and the voluntary agencies permitted to underwrite the sponsorship of groups of immigrants with respect to employment and housing.
—That special visas be issued to wives, husbands, and children so that the entire family might not be obliged to emigrate together.
—That where an entire family is excluded because a single member is suffering from partially arrested tuberculosis, visas be granted if provision is made for tuberculosis treatment in this country under the direction of a federal medical authority.*

Nothing was said in these recommendations about the insistence of Corsi and other critics of the program that its administration be removed from the office of Scott MacLeod. Indeed, the appointment on June 8, 1955, of Pierce J. Gerety as deputy administrator of the Refugee Relief Act was generally interpreted as a rejection of this demand. Mr. MacLeod remains as the titular administrator of the program. Moreover, qualified candidates for the job of deputy administrator who had been nominated by the voluntary agencies were passed over in favor of Mr. Gerety, a lawyer known to be acceptable to Congressman Walter and formerly general counsel of the Civil Service Commission, but without specific experience in the field of immigration.

THE President's recommendations were embodied in S. 2113, introduced by Senator Watkins. Further liberalization of the Act was provided for in various clauses of S. 2140, introduced by Senator Langer, and especially in S. 1794, which was introduced by Senator Herbert Lehman and co-sponsored by Senators Humphrey, Douglas, and Kefauver.

Hostile witnesses at the June 1955 hearings concentrated their attacks on the key provisions of the Lehman bill, which called for removing the administration of the Act from the office of the State Department's security director, for the pooling of the national quotas, and for extending the life of the Refugee Relief Act by an additional four years, ending December 31, 1960. Other provisions of the Lehman bill, some of which appeared in modified form in the Watkins bill, called for:
—Eliminating the distinction between "refugee" and "escapee" now contained in the law.
—Eliminating the requirement that a refugee must not be "firmly resettled" and must be in "urgent need of assistance for the essentials of life and transportation."
—Increasing by 15,000 the over-all visas authorized under the act and making escapees residing in Spain and North Africa eligible for these visas.
—Eliminating the onerous term "ethnic" from the provisions of the act.
—Raising the age of eligible orphans from the present maximum of ten to fourteen years.
—Eliminating the requirement that the alien applying for adjustment of his status to that of permanent resident in the United States must have been "lawfully admitted."
—Eliminating the requirement that persons escaping from behind the Iron Curtain must have passports or other travel documents. This requirement has frequently strained relations between the United States and other nations.
—Eliminating the requirement that a fully documented two-year history of each alien be available prior to his being eligible for admission under the Act.
—Repealing Section 12 of the Refugee Act providing for a system of priorities for the issuance of visas.
—Permitting individual housing and employ-

*A step in this direction was taken by the passage, during the closing days of the Eighty-fourth Congress, of H.R. 6086. This private bill permits the entrance of 108 persons—spouses and children of United States citizens and lawful resident aliens—by the posting of a public-charge bond in behalf of each alien, and the fulfilment of the conditions for his care, hospitalization, and maintenance prescribed by the Surgeon General.

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ment assurances to be given for aliens by recognized voluntary agencies.

At the June 1955 hearings, all the national groups and, with the exception of Church World Service, all the voluntary agencies urged adoption of the Lehman bill. In general, the line-up for and against the liberalization of the Refugee Relief Act closely resembled the alignment of forces at the 1953 hearings of the Truman Commission on Immigration and Naturalization, held after the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act. Several of the witnesses who supported the Lehman bill borrowed effectively from earlier testimony concerning the disastrous restrictions, inequities, and discriminations embodied in our basic immigration law. On the whole, however, the hearings were disappointing in that the friends of an intelligent immigration policy failed to achieve either an impressive mobilization of the different interested groups or a comprehensive and coherent presentation of the issues.

A MAJOR difficulty of the immigration problem is that it can no longer present itself, as it did to 19th-century sensibilities like those of Bartholdi and Emma Lazarus, as a humanitarian issue pure and simple. Rather, it is a collateral aspect of other issues, most of them political and economic.

To the degree that a liberalized immigration policy might arouse fears that the jobs of American workers would be endangered, it is a domestic economic issue. To the degree that better treatment of Iron Curtain refugees would strengthen our hand vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc, it is an issue of defense and foreign policy. To the degree that relaxing the security requirements of the Refugee Relief Act and of the McCarran-Walter Act might facilitate Communist espionage and subversion, it is a security issue.

Our failure to legislate a realistic, statesmanlike immigration and refugee policy would seem to be due, in part at least, to the more or less calculated confusion and obscuration of these issues, and especially to the demagogic exaggeration of the security issue by the enemies of immigration in Congress.

That immigration involves serious security hazards is the primary assumption around which both the McCarran-Walter Act and the Refugee Relief Act were written. Even the amendments proposed by the President would leave the administration of the Act where Congress, by a dubious extension of the legislative power, placed it: namely, in the hands of the State Department's chief security officer, despite the latter's obvious unfitness for a task demanding an entirely different kind of experience, training, and temperament.

Actually, security is a minor and incidental aspect of any immigration or refugee program. Logic suggests that the MGB, the Soviet secret police, would seek to send undercover agents across the mined and guarded frontiers and into the refugee camps, and experience shows that this has been in fact a routine practice. But at this point security becomes the primary concern and responsibility of the DP camp administrators and of the security authorities of the country in which the camps are located. The presence of Communist agents in the DP camps and refugee colonies does not affect our immigration policy unless these Communist agents apply for visas to this country—which few of them do. Why should Moscow employ this slow, circuitous, and relatively hazardous route when it can readily send its agents across the Mexican or Canadian borders, or recruit undercover operatives from the American Communist party and among fellow-travelers, and direct their efforts from the Russian and satellite embassies?

The answer, of course, is that the MGB uses its pseudo-escapees for quite different purposes: chiefly to aggravate the disillusionment and disaffection caused by the unspeakable living conditions prevailing in many of the camps, and by the frustrations and delays encountered by the refugees when they try to get into this country. The security provisions of the Refugee Relief Act were well calculated to foster the suc-

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cess of Communist propaganda and subversion in the camps. Even the lowering of the security and sponsorship barriers to immigration along the lines recommended by the President would be far from enough to repair the damage already done.

For that, there would be required a positive immigration and refugee relief program designed to implement with deeds the verbal welcome which the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberation extend to potential escapees from Iron Curtain countries. This would mean bigger refugee appropriations, better conditions in the camps, and the abandonment of the national origins quota system as well as the relaxation of the present unreal and self-defeating security restrictions.

Such a program would mean treating the refugees not as probable security risks until proved otherwise, but as worthy human beings and also potentially valuable instruments of a foreign policy and moral purpose aimed at supporting and encouraging disaffection with the tyranny of the Communist satellites.

A POSITIVE refugee relief program is in fact the only practical means of countering the alarming success of Moscow's re-defection campaign, which has already seriously impaired one of our most potent political assets. Among the many unpleasant things that Edward Corsi learned in Europe, despite the vigilance of his security chaperons, was that at least 100,000 refugees have gone back through the Iron Curtain during the past four or five years, among them from 20 to 25 per cent of those from Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary have all declared amnesties for returned refugees. Last March, Moscow's re-defection campaign came into the open with the establishment of a "Committee for the Return to the Homeland." The committee is headed by a Soviet major general and equipped with a lavishly subsidized newspaper called *H.E.P.N.D.* This propaganda sheet is distributed in the DP camps by Communist agents and mailed free to large numbers of refugees, for whom the *H.E.P.N.D.* keeps an astonishingly accurate address file. The refugees are also the targets of a systematic letter-writing campaign. From their families behind the Iron Curtain come glowing accounts of the prosperity at home, of the benignity of the secret police, and of the forgiveness and welcome that await the returned refugee.

Moscow's re-defection campaign also makes effective use of the Communist parties and front organizations in Western countries. An article entitled "We Want to Come Home," published in the Canadian Slovak paper *Luduvo Zvesti,* was promptly reprinted on the other side of the Iron Curtain in the *Bratislava Pravda.* The article asserted that copies of *H.E.P.N.D.* were reaching exiles in the United States, England, France, and West Germany, all of them alleged to be living in desperate conditions. They were planning to return home, it said, despite "the threats of anti-Communist traitors."

Unhappily, *H.E.P.N.D.* can find much real substance on which to base its re-defection propaganda. The war deposited a pool of some 40 million refugees in the host countries of Western Europe. Of these, at least 15 million are still without secure employment or social roots; thousands of them, in and outside of the DP camps, have been living for years under conditions of indescribable misery. This makes them easy converts to the anti-American propaganda that is ceaselessly disseminated by both Communists and neo-Nazis, so that today the early torrent of escapees has been greatly reduced, while the West-to-East stream of re-defection has reached the substantial proportions of over seventy-five a day.

IS CONGRESS misreading the nation's mind on the subject of refugee and immigration policy? Corsi made this charge at the June hearings. The subcommittee's mail, he suggested, was perhaps not a reliable index of the actual state of popular opinion; his own mail had been running twenty-to-

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one *in favor* of liberalizing the Refugee Relief Act.

It would, of course. Since Corsi's break with the administration and during his subsequent cross-country speaking trip, the religious, civic, labor, and nationality groups have rallied to the support of the man who for thirty years has been one of the most eloquent and effective champions of liberal immigration.

But the same "of course" applies to the anti-immigration mail of Senator William Langer of North Dakota, the subcommittee's chairman. Most of his mail, in all probability, comes from superpatriotic xenophobes whose articulateness is by no means a measure of their numbers or of their influence.

The Women's Patriotic Conference, the American Coalition, and the General Society of the War of 1812, to whose spokesmen the committee listened with exemplary patience, are all paper federations of state and local affiliates whose chief activities would appear to be that of passing resolutions and sending telegrams to Washington. It has yet to be proved that they represent any substantial sector of American opinion; in fact, the current evidence runs to the contrary. Yet it is the xenophobic attitude that continues to triumph in the field of immigration.

While the hearings on amending the Refugee Relief Act were in progress, the American Institute of Public Opinion announced the results of its poll of popular sentiment on the McCarran-Walter Act. Of those who were familiar with the existing immigration laws, 53 per cent wanted the Act changed and only 15 per cent wanted it left unchanged. Of those who wanted it changed, 68 per cent wanted it liberalized. When asked, "Would you approve or disapprove of having a few families from Europe come to this neighborhood to live?" 63 per cent voted approval. It is reasonable to suppose that a public opinion poll on the amendment of the Refugee Relief Act would have yielded similar results.

As Corsi and others have repeatedly pointed out, the churches and the nationality groups are politically important, and they are all for liberalizing our immigration policy; likewise the leadership of organized labor, whose spokesmen testified effectively at the hearings. Even the isolationist farmers of the West and Middle West are influenced by their current need of farm labor.

One of the most effective statements in support of the Lehman bill was made by David Carliner, representing the American Veterans Committee, who put to good use testimony given before the Truman commission. Arguing that the requirements of national defense and of the expansion of the American economy demand the admission of more, not fewer, immigrants, Mr. Carliner cited data of the Selective Service Commission showing that in 1955 we have 200,000 fewer men coming of military age than we had in 1940. There are also shortages of manpower, he pointed out, in many segments of the American economy, including farm labor and especially in the low-wage service industries. The short birth classes of the depression years have cut the growth of our labor force. Because of these and other strains on our expanding economy, so conservative a demographer as Dr. Frank W. Notestein, director of the Office of Population Research at Princeton University, has favored an annual rate of immigration of 500,000, or about three times the total annual quota allowed, even with the augmented immigration permitted under the Displaced Persons Act, which admitted over 400,000 immigrants. American labor leaders are somewhat more cautious in their appraisals of the assimilative capacity of the American economy. But both the AFL and the CIO have supported the Lehman-Celler bill, which would admit about a quarter of a million immigrants a year.*

It is true, of course, that the minuscule

*At its December 1954 convention, the CIO called for the liberalization of the Immigration and Nationality Act and for the administration of the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 "in accordance with its provisions and as Congress intended, instead of seeking to nullify the statute by thwarting and minimizing immigration."

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American Veterans Committee, which specializes in being informed and intelligent about such things, speaks with a still, small voice compared to the thunder of the two big veterans' organizations, both of which with minor qualifications opposed the liberalization of the Refugee Relief Act. But it is also true that the legislative representatives of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars do not always reflect accurately the views of their rank and file, a substantial proportion of whom are of recent immigrant stock.

FINALLY, however, it must be recognized that what Congress habitually listens to are not the still, small voices of wisdom but the loud voices that represent votes, or sound as if they do. The disturbing fact is that at the hearings on the bills amending the Refugee Relief Act, the voices favoring its liberalization were neither numerous enough nor loud enough to get any of these bills out of committee.

Administration and Democratic spokesmen blamed each other for this failure. On July 30 Senator Kilgore quoted voluminously from the promises of President Eisenhower, both during and after the 1952 election, to amend the McCarran-Walter Act. Vainly, he reported, he had tried to ascertain the position of the administration in 1955 on fundamental immigration and naturalization policies. The administration, he charged, was "ambiguous, unresponsive, and evasive in answering my inquiries."

In reply, Senator Watkins pointed out that responsibility for reporting bills dealing with the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Refugee Relief Act lies in the Judiciary Committee, which is controlled by the Democratic party. There had been a split in the subcommittee, he said, with three in favor of a bill liberalizing the Refugee Relief Act and three against. Hence, after repeated failures to get a quorum of the subcommittee, the bill had been reported without recommendation to the full Judiciary Committee, which is expected to resume hearings on the measure when Congress reconvenes.

Meanwhile the Refugee Relief Act remains unamended and the Statue of Liberty continues unsmiling. No amount of administrative stretching, in the opinion of most of the voluntary agencies, is going to make possible the fulfillment of the Act's objectives by December 30, 1956.

Is partisan politics to blame for this unhappy stand-off? Only in part. Much as one might like to agree with Corsi's belief that Congress has "misread the mind of the nation," the more realistic answer is perhaps that the nation has not yet made up its mind to change what has by now become a traditional immigration policy. Rightly or wrongly, most of our legislators believe that most of their constituents favor a restrictive policy.

It is also true that the security aspect of immigration has been deliberately exaggerated. Yet Representative Walter can still get applause when he tells his audiences that the way to fight Communism is to raise immigration barriers against its victims.

In short, there is a considerable job of education still to be done. Immigration will undoubtedly be an issue in the 1956 election, when our legislators and their constituents will again educate each other on this and other subjects. Only as a result of such education may we hope that *some* Congrss—perhaps the Eighty-sixth—will have a clear enough mandate to warrant putting a smile on Liberty's face.

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THE JEWISH MISSION TO THE NATIONS

Should Modern Judaism Try to Win Souls?

JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI

SOME time ago a call for conversions to Judaism was issued from the floor of Reform's Central Conference of American Rabbis. A body of Orthodox rabbis was quick to protest, as might have been expected. For this call was made in the course of a report on conversions to Judaism that had been mostly performed by Reform rabbis before officiating at what would otherwise have been mixed marriages; and Orthodoxy regards this motive as incompatible with the sincere desire to take upon oneself the "yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven."

It is a pity that the whole question of Jewish missionary effort should be confused by a side issue. It is conceivable, for example, that a rabbi who performs "conversions" for the sake of marriage would not favor any effort at a wholesale conversion of Gentiles. On the other hand, many rabbis adhering to the traditional restrictions on conversion for marriage might favor a greater effort in this direction, construing the "mission of Israel" to involve an appeal to the world at large to turn to Judaism. In any case the whole question is, at best, complex and needs patient exposition, for the Jewish attitude to proselytism has undergone many changes though the ages, and must be understood in its varying historical contexts—including that of the present.

The crucial doctrine of any one religion implies the negation of the basic thought of every other religion. If the first of the Ten Commandments states: "I am the Lord, thy God," the second, quite logically, demands: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Since the man of religion claims to be in possession of the Truth, it follows that those who do not accept his particular revelation are in error. The next step is to make those who wander in darkness see the great light; thus the missionary idea is born. Two sets of feelings are working here, often together. On the one hand, the missionary's fanatical devotion to his ideal may impel him to bring the whole world under its sway—if need be with fire and sword. On the other hand, the missionary may be animated by unbounded love for his fellow men. He wants to save them from the perdition which he feels to be in store for them if they do not avail themselves of the salvation he can bring. It will be remembered that in the Middle Ages the Church burned Jews and heretics not only *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, but also in order to save their souls from eternal damnation.

WHEN what we know as Judaism first emerged, its adherents seem to have recognized the legitimacy—for others—of other forms of religion. Yahweh was the God of Israel. He was the mightiest God of all. But this did not cancel out the fact that Kemosh, to take but one example, was the legitimate god of the Moabites. When David was compelled to take refuge among the Philistines, he represented his plight as one that forced him to worship the Philistine gods. Conversely, when Ruth decided to cast in her lot with Naomi, she declared: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

But this legitimation of different deities on a geographical basis could not survive the development of the Hebrew prophets. If Yahweh is the God not only of Israel but all mankind, then all other gods are merely

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ALTHOUGH the expectation of universal adherence to the God of Israel still figures in Jewish liturgy, it is an ultimate rather than a practical hope. JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI here discusses the past and present meaning of a Jewish mission to the Gentiles, and suggests also that such a mission today might revitalize Judaism for the Jews themselves. Rabbi Petuchowski was born in Berlin in 1926 and ordained at Hebrew Union College. He is at present rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel in Washington, Pennsylvania.

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"wood and stone, the work of men's hands." Ultimately the nations will recognize the error of their ways, and they will say: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

The Babylonian Exile helped to clarify the concept of the universal God and the role of Israel in the divine scheme of things. If the God of Israel could be worshipped in Babylon, then you need not even be a born Israelite to worship Him. Your Gentile neighbor, without having to immigrate to Palestine, could share your faith. The Exile was, therefore, providential. Israel was the Servant of Yahweh, and his mission was to be "a light unto the nations." A contemporary prophet proclaimed: "Let not the alien, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying: 'The Lord will surely separate me from His people'!" Rather did he hold out the hope that the reconstructed Temple would be "a house of prayer for all peoples."

This hope, as we know, was not fulfilled. But in the Hellenistic and Roman days of the Second Temple, Judaism conducted very active missionary propaganda. Jesus described the Pharisees as crossing land and sea to make converts. Many of the writings now found in collections of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were originally Jewish propaganda leaflets addressed to pagans in their own language and imagery. Josephus claimed that there was not a Greek or barbarian city into which the observance of Jewish customs had not penetrated, and classical Roman authors bear him out—though, unlike Josephus, they do not find this state of affairs commendable.

This propaganda was in large part an appeal to reason: first the pagans were to be convinced of the futility of their idols, and then they were to be converted to Judaism; conversion by compulsion was not envisaged.* But Judaism was never an easy religion to take upon oneself. Many pagans, to whom its theological and ethical content was attractive, refused to submit to the full "yoke of the Law," though they might accept one or another Jewish observance. The synagogues of Alexandria and Asia Minor were frequented by such semi-converts, who became known as "Fearers of the Lord."

From this group, too, came many of the first Christians, but Paul's repeated warnings to his disciples against the adoption of Jewish ritual would indicate that Jewish missionary propaganda continued to represent a serious threat to Pauline Christianity. The competition went on for many years—until Christianity won the battle for the soul of the old Mediterranean world by becoming the state religion of the Roman Empire. Henceforth, the death penalty was decreed for missionary and convert alike.

THROUGHOUT the Middle Ages many outstanding individuals, and even a whole people—the Khazars—found spiritual refuge in Judaism. But active missionary propaganda had ceased. The rabbis of the Talmud argued about the prerequisites of the true proselyte to whom, depending upon external political factors, a more or less hearty welcome was extended. Of course, the ultimate unification of mankind in the service of the God of Israel still figured in the Jewish hope for the "End of Days," and remains even now a leading element in the liturgy of the New Year's festival. But, somehow or other, no active steps to bring that about were contemplated. The conversion of the world now became part of that whole Jewish eschatology whose fulfillment was conceived in miraculous rather than practical terms.

Yet the idea of what may be called a "passive mission" persisted. Although the destruction of the Temple and the Exile were generally regarded as merited punishments for the sins of Israel, an alternative view was also recorded in rabbinic literature: that God had scattered the children of Israel to the four corners of the earth in order to bring all men under the wings of the *Shechinah*. Since the Jew was to live in such a way that his behavior would constitute a "sanctification of the Name of God," there was the natural corollary that his example might well make the Jewish God and Judaism attractive to the Gentile. Indicative of this mood is the story told in the Talmud

*Only once, under the Maccabean ruler John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.E.), was Judaism imposed upon other peoples, fellow Palestinians, at the point of the sword. But this was a political rather than a religious move, and the Jews were to have ample cause to regret it.

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of Simeon ben Shetah, who was so scrupulously honest in a business transaction with a pagan that the latter exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Simeon ben Shetah!" The countless martyrs, too, who died "for the sanctification of the Name," did not fail to make an impression on at least some Gentiles. One of the most moving documents we have preserved is the fragment of a Hebrew prayerbook written by Obadiah ha-Ger, a Crusader no less, who was converted to Judaism.*

But this does not change the fact that Judaism remained a non-missionary religion. Nor did unfavorable external conditions alone account for this. Jews risked and lost their lives for the right to practice Jewish ritual, and they would have done the same to seek converts if that were deemed necessary. It would seem, rather, that the medieval Jew lacked one important motivation which would have justified his taking the risks involved. When the medieval Church engaged in missionary work, its ideal intention was to rescue the non-believer from perdition, since "there was no salvation outside of the Church." But there was no such countering Jewish sentiment: there *could* be salvation outside of the Synagogue. "The righteous of all nations have a share in the World to Come." And, in fact, the righteousness that would entitle the Gentile to his share in the hereafter was specifically defined by the Talmud in seven simple rules of elementary human morality, the so-called "Seven Laws of the Sons of Noah." God, it was claimed, had made a covenant with mankind *as a whole* in the days of Noah; and, unlike the covenant He later made with Israel, this Noahitic covenant had no ceremonial or ritual provisions. The Noahitic laws prohibited idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, theft, and the eating of part of a living animal; on the positive side, the establishment of courts of justice was commanded. And, though the grosser manifestations of idolatry were prohibited, the "Son of Noah," unlike the Jew, could remain within the limits of the law even if his theistic belief extended not to Yahweh, but to "associates of God." Clearly, then, the Christian or Moslem living by the dictates of a faith that did not conflict with the Noahitic covenant could be saved without submitting to Jewish law. Not only did the Jew not proselytize, he carefully scrutinized the motives of the would-be convert. If he was moved by a desire for marriage, or by love for someone, or by fear, he could not be accepted. In general, the principle governing the admission of unsolicited proselytes was summed up in the phrase: "Let your left hand thrust them away, and your right hand draw them nigh." In practice, this meant that the would-be convert had to answer the following questions: "Why do you insist on becoming a Jew? Do you not see that this people is the most lowly and crushed of all the peoples, suffering from persecution for the sake of their observances?" If the would-be convert persisted, he was warned that many things now permitted to him would be prohibited under the Jewish law. Thus, while the medieval Jew could sing with great fervor:

All the world shall come to serve Thee,
And bless Thy glorious name

he did not feel called upon, as the pious Christian did and still does, to engage himself in the "winning of souls."

With Emancipation and the granting of civil rights to the Jews of Western Europe and America, the question of a Jewish mission took on a new significance. The Orthodox Jew, to be sure, could pretend, at least in theory, that nothing was changed: Emancipation meant alleviation of the sufferings that had become so characteristic of Jewish life, and therefore was to be welcomed. But, after all, it was only an *external* matter—exile was still exile. For the nascent Reform movement, however, the idea of exile lost its significance. One of Reform's first steps was to eliminate from the prayerbook all reference to the Messiah and the Return. These Jews were Germans now—and, later, Americans—and they did not look forward to a Messianic return to Palestine. But if the Jews were not "in exile," if they were not a people that looked forward to a common political future, what were they then?

They were, Reform said, a universal re-

*It can be seen in the Library of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and is listed as *Geniza Fragment No. 8.*

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ligious brotherhood. This was not to deny their ultimate common roots in the soil of Judea. But some eighteen centuries had passed, and it was evidently part of the divine plan to transform the Jews from a nation into a "church." The centuries since the destruction of the Jewish state, then, were not to be regarded as a period of probation leading toward forgiveness and Return. Rather were they to be understood as a divinely ordained "education" intended to wean Israel away from its Palestinian and political past towards a larger field of religious activity.

It was not hard to find authority for this transition from a negative-sounding "exile" to the universalistic overtones of a "world-embracing religious community" in the very sources of rabbinic Judaism itself. Reference has already been made to the deviant rabbinic view that saw the dispersion of the Jewish people as a means of bringing all men under the wing of Israel's God. This view was now resurrected, and, together with the Deutero-Isaiah's concept of the "Servant of the Lord," became the chief support of the new Jewish outlook.

To many Jews, especially those from Eastern Europe, Reform's "mission" idea seemed an absurd attempt to reduce the totality of Jewish cultural expression to a few theological propositions, some of which the non-Jewish world had already accepted, and others of which it was unlikely ever to accept. To historians and sociologists of a later generation, the Reform concept of a "mission" looked like a piece of feeble apologetics by which those just short of being complete assimilationists tried to account for their incomplete assimilation. And in any case, there seemed to be a paradox to many in the fact that the same group that "diluted" —as it was often said—Judaism to the end of making it more and more like Christianity, was the same one that made a chief point of the Jewish mission to the Gentiles.

But was it mere apologetics? Is it not true that the German Jew caught up in Emancipation regarded Judaism as a purely *religious* question? Nobody forced the Jew of the Emancipation era to remain a member of the Jewish community; if he remained one it was because of his *religious* beliefs. For now, by the acceptance of baptism, he could not only gain a "ticket of admission to European culture" (in Heine's phrase), but could hope to obtain important positions in government, law, and the universities. As a communicant member of the Anglican Church, Benjamin Disraeli could become Prime Minister of England.

It is wrong, therefore, to regard Reform Judaism with its "mission" doctrine as a mere device to ease assimilation. Assimilation could be got without the efforts of theologians. Whatever may be our final judgment on Reform, we must credit the men who propounded the "mission" doctrine with sincere religious convictions.

Moreover, the historic fact is that any *religious* interpretation of Judaism cannot, ultimately, do without some form or another of the "mission" idea. The "End of Days," the prophetic hope for the future, has always been part of Judaism. The first question a man will be asked before the Throne of Judgment, so runs an ancient tradition, is: "Have you been looking forward to salvation?" A basic element of this hoped-for salvation *(yeshuah)*, one around which all the other eschatological hopes clustered, was the Return to Palestine, the Coming of the Messiah. But, as we have seen, the Western Jew was now quite content to stay where he was. And if we believe, with a Talmudic sage and with the great Maimonides, that the sole difference between our age and the Messianic era can be defined as the absence in the latter of Jewish persecution at the hands of "foreign" governments, then this hope, too, promised to be fulfilled in "exile." But there *had* to be an "End of Days," a vision of some Messianic future yet to be, to provide the dynamics for continued Jewish existence. This need was met by the "mission" theory.

In itself, of course, the idea of a united mankind worshipping the God of Israel was nothing startlingly new. It had always been part of the Jewish hope for the "End of Days," and had received its classic formulation in the prophecies of the Second Isaiah. What was new was the forceful way in which it was now put—to the exclusion of much else that had hitherto been regarded as an integral part of the Jewish Messianic hope. New, too, was the reinterpretation of the Jewish past *exclusively* in terms of a universal mission.

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How far-reaching this reinterpretation could be was illustrated by Rabbi David Einhorn's prayer for Tisha b'Ab, the traditional fast day in commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem. "When at last his great sacrifice of atonement is completely wrought, he [Israel] will find his reward in seeing all men gather into one brotherhood, doing God's service in love to man. In this our hope, this day of mourning and fasting hath, according to the word of Thy prophet, been turned into a solemn day of rejoicing in view of the glorious destiny of Thy law and our high Messianic mission which had its beginning with the historic events which we recall today."

"Doing God's service in love to man," to be sure, was a formula that bound the human brotherhood to no specific religious denomination. One could do God's service as a Christian or a Buddhist, *à la* Toynbee. But Isaac M. Wise, the great organizer of American Reform Judaism, was much more specific: he predicted, half a century ago, that liberal Judaism would be the religion of all Americans in the 20th century.

THERE can be no doubt that those Reformers who held the mission theory with any degree of consistency sincerely believed that the Gentile world might eventually turn to Judaism. The growth of democratic institutions, the concern with social betterment, and, above all, the constitutional establishment of the equality of all men seemed to them to indicate that the Hebrew prophets were carrying the day. And certain liberal trends in contemporary Christianity made it seem as though the more pronouncedly "Jewish" dogmas of Christianity were slowly rising to the surface. The resultant Unitarianism was felt to mean a rapprochement with Judaism, especially insofar as both Unitarianism and Reform Judaism boasted of having broken the shackles of the past. So closely did these two liberal offshoots of the traditional religions come to resemble each other that the Reformers often had to answer the question: "What *is* the difference between Reform Judaism and Unitarianism?" The answer invariably pointed to their different *historical* antecedents. Reform Judaism was, after all, unwilling to renounce the *yichus* of belonging to the "people of the prophets."

Yet the cords of the Jewish tent were stretched wide to facilitate the entry of converts. The requirement of circumcision was dispensed with. A proselyte's statement of belief in the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of Man, and the mission of Israel was regarded as sufficient. In England, Claude Montefiore, the founder of the radical Liberal Synagogue, argued that only such festivals should be retained in the Jewish calendar as had meaning for the Gentile as well as for the Jew. The festival of Purim, for example, with its presumed exclusive appeal to the born Jew, was dropped. The barest minimum of Hebrew was retained in the Reform service, nor did the Jew have any longer to observe the "Oriental" custom of covering his head. The dietary laws, too, were abolished, in order, as Kaufmann Kohler claimed, to facilitate intimate contact between Jew and Gentile as part of the "mission of Israel." With all this, the "mission" had no great success. The overwhelming majority of those who applied for admission to Judaism still did so for the sake of marriage—and continue to do so today. These "converts" came, and would continue to come, without any concept of a "mission of Israel."

Why did the mission have so little impact? For one thing, because there proved to be very little beyond verbal fervor behind it. The obverse of Reform's tolerance and responsiveness to the non-Jewish environment was its relativism as compared to Orthodoxy. Reform does not claim to be in possession of the absolute truth: all religions lead to God; Judaism is but one of them. We are still groping, even as others are. Consequently, the Reform Jew felt himself even less strongly impelled than his Orthodox brother to urge his particular brand of "salvation" upon his neighbor.

Thus, in spite of all the homiletical fervor which has always marked Reform pronouncements on the issue, the glorious "mission of Israel" resolves itself into what it has always been over the past eighteen centuries: the "passive mission" that works through "precept and example." And the steps taken to "Occidentalize" Judaism and make it more attractive (by making it less "different") to the outsider, far from swelling the ranks of Judaism with sincere and convinced converts, seem rather to have led to a weakening of the attachment of the Jew himself to Judaism. Instead of assimilating the world to Judaism,

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these efforts have all too frequently resulted in an assimilation of Judaism to the world—as Solomon Schechter had warned they would.

No doubt there are many liberal Christians who could easily subscribe to the conversion formula used by the Reform synagogue if they were inclined to cut themselves loose from the symbolism and emotionally charged pageantry through which, in spite of their liberalism, they have been accustomed to express their faith. But if this possibility rests simply on the fact that liberal Christianity and liberal Judaism have come to resemble each other, the question is: *why* should a liberal Christian become converted to liberal Judaism? And here we must touch upon an irony of the present situation: if, as the early Reformers staunchly maintained, Judaism is Ethical Monotheism, then a *theistic* God concept would seem to be a *conditio sine qua non* of *any* form of Judaism which claimed to have a mission to the world at large. It so happens, however, that there are liberal Christians whose concept of God is much more in accord with the theistic tradition of Judaism than are the "humanist" disquisitions on the "God idea" of many rabbis who occupy Reform and Conservative pulpits. Who, then, is to convert whom to a more vitally "religious" religion in the name of the Jewish "mission"?

The trouble is, of course, that the non-Orthodox Jew has no definite program on which to campaign. The Orthodox Jew could conceivably enter the arena with the Creed of Maimonides in one hand and the Shulchan Aruch in the other. He could say to the prospective convert: "Here is the Law. Here is a new way of living. Take it!" And then the convert would really have taken something; he would not merely be moving from one "branch" of universal religion to another. But the spokesmen of a non-Orthodox Judaism, on the other hand, can often offer only a statement of beliefs couched in the vaguest of terms, and recommendations that certain rituals be practiced for aesthetic reasons, or for philosophical or therapeutic ones, or as "folkways." If the prospective convert is confronted with a statement that leaves it an open question whether or not God is a Person, whether or not there is such a *fact* as Revelation, whether or not prayer is answered, and with an idea of ceremonial practice completely divorced from any idea of "divine commandment"—if he is confronted with a non-committal statement of this kind (which, at the moment, seems to be the best we can do for him), then he might think twice before burning his inherited bridges to salvation behind him.

It might be argued, of course, that the making of creeds is foreign to Judaism. We have no dogma-making synod, and even the thirteen Articles of Maimonides have never received formal, or even general, approval. As far as the practical observances of Judaism are concerned, there is no agreement among non-Orthodox Jews about their obligatory character (nor is there likely to be any until a theological framework is created that invests the ceremonies of non-Orthodox Judaism with an earnestness that would mark them as an integral part of the man-God relation). Yet possibly just this comparative freedom from dogma and ecclesiasticism might be one of Judaism's chief appeals. Here the convert can find piety without abdication of reason, the hope of immortality without renunciation of the world, and revelation without fundamentalist literalism. There must be many to whom this type of religion would have an enormous appeal.

But it is only fair to point out that "Judaism" is not the only label attached to this kind of religion. It can be had in many of the liberal Christian churches as well. If Judaism is to be offered *qua Judaism,* it will have to be presented in a definition *per genus et differentiam.* If we offer only a more "rational" religion, what do we have to show that cannot be obtained anywhere else?

Like Judah Halevi's reconstruction of the debate which led to the conversion of the king of the Khazars, a modern programmatic statement of Judaism might well begin with a consideration of Jewish *history,* rather than with scholastic proofs of the existence of God. What is the "secret" of Jewish survival? What is there in the heritage of Judaism that has enabled the Jew to retain his spiritual and emotional equilibrium under the most adverse conditions?*

*See Arnold J. Wolf, in Commentary, April 1953, on how this "pragmatic" approach to Judaism is eagerly pursued by some contemporary Japanese.

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This would be the context in which to mention the Jew's belief in his destiny as a people and as an individual, and the concomitant belief that his every act is of significance, both for his own spiritual growth and for the advancement of the ideal society. Nor is history haphazard; its course is determined by the goodness and evil of man. Man's freedom to act gives him his intimations of the divine and raises him to the position of "God's partner in the work of creation," which is daily renewed. There is no aimlessness or despair in Jewish life. Obstacles are there to be overcome, though the struggle is not always easy, or successful.

Above all, the God of Judaism is a unifying principle. There is no artificial dichotomy between body and soul, between matter and spirit. The one like the other is the handiwork of God. Man can serve God in the enjoyment of legitimate earthly pleasures as much as in the more narrowly prescribed "religious" exercises. He need not die unto his flesh in order to enhance his best spiritual qualities. Not escape from mundane life, but the sanctification of the totality of that life, is the highest aspiration of the Jew.

Man's deeds, not his theological professions, bring him close to God or remove him from God. The speculative avenues by which man reaches God are manifold; but they are supplemented by the whole people's experience of the God of history. Complete trust in God crowns man's search. But, along with saints noted for their complete submission to the inscrutable will of God, Judaism also honors the man of faith whose moral sense is outraged by happenings beyond his comprehension. There is room in Judaism for an Abraham and a Jeremiah, a Job and a Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev who "argue" with God. Such "struggles with God" are neither heresy nor sin.

Nor, again, is sin something inherent in man's constitution, something transmitted through the generations from a mythical "Fall." A man is responsible only for his own acts. If he has sinned, the "gates of repentance" are always open to him. Confession to God—not to any intermediary—remorse, and avoidance of the same sin when temptation arises again, are the sole means of restoring his harmonious relation with God.

In addition to prayer, Judaism conceives of study as a form of worship. From the early rabbinic identification of Torah with wisdom through the recognition of reason as a source of truth in medieval Jewish philosophy, culminating in Maimonides' demand for a cultivation of the secular sciences as a preliminary to the full understanding of Judaism, there has been a persistent trend in Judaism to seek for a knowledge of God's ways in all branches of serious study. In Judaism, then, while there may be a conflict between the scientific theories of one age and those of another, there can be no conflict between religion and science as such; God reveals Himself through the mind of man.

All this, our statement would conclude, is part of the heritage of Israel. Consciousness of this heritage has led to the developing concept of Israel as the Chosen People of God. Manifold symbolic acts have helped, on the one hand, to keep alive the sense of these values, and, on the other, to preserve the group identification of the widely scattered members of the House of Israel. While, indeed, one or another aspect of this heritage may be found in some non-Jewish religions, especially in their liberal offshoots, it is in Judaism alone that they are all found together, derived as they are from the same basic Hebrew view of God, man, and world.

The fact that Judaism has always had room for the rationalist and the mystic alike, for the prophetic reformer as well as for the priestly conservative, should indicate how much freedom Judaism gives, even in its more traditional conceptions, to the inclinations and the temperament of the individual. Modern Judaism, therefore, does not base its appeal on "reason" to the exclusion of the "heart," or the reverse. It is precisely the unique fusion and interaction of both, and their consequent mutual reinforcement, that encourages the psychological equilibrium of the practicing Jew. That—and the no less important repercussion of Jewish ideals on the pattern of Jewish community life.

Equally important, in comparison with other religious systems, is what Judaism does *not* contain. It has, for example, never made any dogmatic pronouncements about the reality of Heaven and Hell, though it has enabled its adherents to hold any number of divergent views on immortality. Modern man in search of a religion he can accept, need find no stumbling block in Judaism on that

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score. Again, wherever in a modern church you find a positive approach to the sexual aspects of marriage, it will be at the cost of suppressing a whole complex of Paulinian ideas that, for nearly two thousand years, have been basic to the Christian view of man. No such difficulties beset the modern Jew, who can look back to an old tradition in which marriage is considered to be the first commandment that God gave to man, and which prescribes a formula for the marriage service beseeching God to make the newly wed couple as happy together as He did His original creatures in Paradise.

It is to be clearly understood that we have only spoken of "aspects" of Judaism. There is more to Judaism that would appeal to modern man than we have mentioned; and some of the "aspects" singled out by us may not be considered to be of such importance by others. What we have set down here is offered merely as a basis for further consideration in trying to draw up the program of a Jewish mission.

SOME further considerations of a problematical nature cannot be avoided here. The early Reformers stated categorically: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community." But even if the Jews in 1885 defied classification as a "nation" in the sense in which the Germans or the French constituted nations, they were yet something different from a "church." They were, in fact, and still are, a *people*. This fact persisted in obtruding itself upon the Jewish mind, so much so that the *Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism*, published in 1937 to supersede the *Pittsburgh Platform* of 1885, contain statements such as these: "Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people" and "Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body."

Here is a missionary problem that the churches do not have to face. By becoming a Jew, the proselyte not only becomes a believing and practicing Jew; he also becomes a member of the Jewish *people*. Is such a thing possible? Tradition answers yes. A proselyte who asked Maimonides whether he could join his new co-religionists in praying to "our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," was told that he could most certainly do so. Abraham, whom the Bible calls "father of a multitude of nations," is the spiritual father of all true believers, a concept, incidentally, which figures very largely in Paul's attempts to prove that the Christian Church is the true "Israel." To this day, the proselyte is called to the reading of the Torah as *ben Avraham*, "the son of Abraham." And the Talmud claims a pagan ancestry for quite a few of its outstanding teachers. The proselyte, coming to Judaism with a rational conviction of its superiority, will by sharing in the life and destiny of the Jewish community be absorbed in the mainstream of Jewish peoplehood. No less a patriot and Messianic enthusiast than Rabbi Akiba, one of the pillars of rabbinic Judaism, is described as a descendant of the Canaanite general, Sisera, mentioned in the Book of Judges.

The concept of the proselyte as a "son of Abraham" certainly means that Jewish peoplehood was never identified with race or nation in the modern sense. Perhaps that is why in Jewish circles where the contemporary form of nationalism has been elevated almost to a fundamental religious dogma, there is a reluctance to admit Gentile converts. And it is only too true that in recent pronouncements and statements issued by American Jewish religious bodies, one cannot always be so sure whether it is Judaism or "Jewishness" that is being sponsored. Often, indeed, Judaism is presented in nationalist, if not altogether in racist, terms. Where lack of conviction precludes the use of religious terms, political terminology is a handy substitute. Nor do those at the other extreme—the Jews "by religion only"— offer a more satisfactory definition of Jewish life. Insisting in militant publicity campaigns that Judaism is purely and simply a religion, some of their number may yet be found more frequently at Jewish country clubs than in the synagogue.

HAPPILY for our purposes, Judaism defined itself long before the modern terminologies and ideologies arose to becloud the issue. It defined itself, that is to say, with qualifications. For just as the term *ehad* (unique) as applied to God indicates that He is beyond complete definition, so, say the Rabbis, does the same term *ehad*, as applied by Scripture to Israel, show the unique position of the Jewish people and its incompatibility with normal classifications. *Knesseth Israel*, the

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"Community of Israel" (or, as Schechter would have it, "Catholic Israel")—that is how the Rabbis liked to refer to what was both their people and their religion. *Knesseth Israel* was the group of liberated slaves that entered into a covenant relationship with God at Mount Sinai; the covenant was for a time identical with the political state in Palestine, but it became no less real when this state was extinguished. The immortal memories of the common past kept alive the sense of "peoplehood," coupled as it was with the ever present reality that "all Israelites are responsible for one another." But as mere "peoplehood" it would not have been worth speaking about had it not been for the *religious* aims and ideals that were the *raison d'être* of this "people."

It has to be remembered, of course, that the word "religion" as commonly used by us has a much narrower connotation than the Rabbis of old would have accepted. Their understanding of Judaism permitted a distinction between the "holy" and the "profane," and there are "degrees" of holiness in the realm of the "religious" itself. But the dichotomy of "religious" and "secular" would have been quite meaningless to them—just as the division into "rabbinate" and "laity" is a very recent innovation in Judaism, and of doubtful value. In fact, the concept of a religion that is coextensive with life (and vice versa) may be said to be one of the characteristics of classic Judaism.

But, classical definitions apart, the "Community of Israel," or the Jewish Community, is, in fact, what Jewish peoplehood has come to mean for the vast majority of American Jews, whether they realize it or not. And the stress here, quite in the tradition of *Knesseth Israel,* is on both the adjective and the noun. It is this sense of a community of interests expressed in a group dedicated to communal as well as to personal ends which makes Jewish peoplehood a meaningful concept, and perhaps never more so than at the present time when people complain of "rootlessness." If the practical "mission of Israel" is ever to become an actuality in our day, the all-inclusiveness of the Jewish people (community), as contrasted with the Jewish or the Israeli *nation,* is something that will have to be explained not only to the prospective convert, but clarified among Jews themselves.

Whether or not the proselyte will ultimately take an interest in the State of Israel will have to be a problem quite distinct from his conversion. This is not to deny that the State of Israel could have an important role to play in the mission of Israel. Judah Halevi tells us that the loss of Palestine was one of the reasons that delayed the conversion of the king of the Khazars. The practicability of Judaism as a "this-worldly" religion will undoubtedly be judged from the outside on the basis of the social, intellectual, and diplomatic standards of the State of Israel. The state, as it were, will be regarded as the show-case of Judaism in action. But it might be a matter of generations before the State of Israel could fill this role. Nor must her importance be exaggerated at the expense of non-nationalistic manifestations of Judaism. After all, Judaism could have no mission to the world were we to be convinced that a full Jewish life could only be lived on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

But what of the attitude of the Jewish community towards the convert? Our traditional sources are quite outspoken on this point. The Biblical commandment "Love ye the stranger!" was understood by the Rabbis to mean: "Love ye the proselyte!" That this has not invariably been true in modern Jewish communities may, in part, be due to the fact that the vast majority of modern proselytes are merely "proselytes for the sake of marriage" who have not come for the love of God or Judaism. This may well account for the withholding, on the part of the community, of the respect and complete social acceptance traditionally due the convert.

This state of affairs is, of course, not improved by the perfunctory nature of the "conversion" ceremony and the modicum of preparation for it demanded by the Reform synagogue. Both from the point of view of the convert and from that of his ultimate acceptance by the Jewish community, it is psychologically wrong to make the "entrance requirements" easy. It was this psychological insight which, in the rabbinic discussion on whether circumcision was a *conditio sine qua non* for conversion to Judaism, was decisive. (The early Reformers were completely unaware of these deeper implications.) The proselyte must be made to realize the gravity of the step he is taking. But, on the other hand, the Jewish community must appreciate

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the sacrifices which the proselyte has made in order to find "shelter under the wings of the *Shechinah*."

This, however, immediately involves a further problem: what will the convert find in his new religious community? We assume that he will be a Jew by conviction. But the Jews who make up the congregation in which he will find himself are primarily Jews by birth and habit. Only a minority have ever given serious thought to the theological implications of their "Jewishness." Will the convert find in the synagogue what he is looking for? Or will he be repelled by the distance he cannot fail to notice between the Jewish ideal and the Jewish reality?

We have no ready-made answer for this, and no precedent to go by. But perhaps we are entitled to hope. Is it not just possible that even the Jew "by birth and habit," or at any rate his son, will sooner or later search for the *rationale* of his "Jewishness"? And, if and when he does so, is it not plausible to assume that he will find very little satisfaction in the mere fact of "being different" from the non-Jewish world? Especially if he does not *really* want to be regarded as an "outsider" by his Gentile neighbor? It is then that the Jew might come to a realization of the value of the religio-ethical community of which he is nominally a part. And particularly if this Jewish community should regard itself as an open community concerned with the problems of society as a whole, and welcoming all who wish to join it, then there is hope that the individual Jew will live up to what the world expects of him, namely: to embody the ideals he preaches to others. The convert may then find what he is looking for.

Some conclusions may now be drawn. It is clear that those Jews who deem Judaism to be a religion for Jews alone do not face up to the future hope of Judaism as outlined by prophet and Talmudist alike. If Judaism has no message for mankind as a whole, it might easily become the exclusive cult of the Israeli state. Elsewhere it might be able to survive as a tribal relic for a little while longer. Its religious observances will then indeed become mere "folkways," and its theology will lack that sweep which, in normative Judaism, has always embraced the "End of Days" as well as the "Days of Yore."

But if, on the other hand, it be conceded that Judaism has a mission to the world, the time has come for some clarification. Since most of us no longer speak in terms of a miraculous divine intervention, this mission will either be the "passive mission" such as was forced upon us by medieval intolerance, or it will mean the resumption of more open missionary activity.

To conceive, with Franz Rosenzweig and his latter-day disciples, that the missionary aspect of Judaism is being fulfilled by Christianity as a kind of "Judaism designed for pagans" would mean ascribing to twenty centuries of Christian history an importance quite out of keeping with the Jewish *species aeternitatis*—even as it would be to fly in the face of any number of historical facts, such as the active Jewish missionary propaganda in the early Christian centuries, and the particular political conditions that enabled Christianity to overcome its Jewish competitor in the 4th century. But to part company with Rosenzweig on his interpretation of Christianity does not mean that, as Jews, we have to ignore the Christian achievement. Maimonides saw in both Christianity and Islam a "paving of the way for King Messiah." But Maimonides does not fail to add: "When King Messiah arrives in truth, then they will immediately repent and know that they have inherited falsehood from their fathers, and that their prophets and their fathers have led them astray." It is only Rosenzweig's quasi-biological understanding of Jewish peoplehood that enables him to see Christianity as Judaism for the Gentiles.

Twenty centuries ago the synagogues of the Hellenistic world were regarded by educated pagans as schools of a viable philosophy of life to which they felt increasingly attracted. Today the synagogue will have to re-emphasize its teaching function in order to appeal to the modern seeker after a satisfying *Weltanschauung*. As this writer imagines it, the missionary outposts of modern Judaism —if they should come into existence—would often take the prosaic form of libraries and reading rooms. No damnation can be pronounced on "unbelievers," but Judaism can be presented as an answer to many of life's problems, an answer meriting the attention of modern men and women, whether they be of Jewish "stock" or not.

We must still affirm that salvation belongs

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to "the righteous of all nations"; the man seeking his personal "salvation" is not required, absolutely, to become a Jew. But a militant Judaism would insist that the case is different with the salvation of the world as a whole. This *is* envisaged in terms of an all-embracing Judaism. While not claiming a monopoly on the key that will unlock the gate to the "kingdom which is not of this world," religious Jews do believe that the plans for God's kingdom *on earth* have been delivered into their keeping; that Judaism, as the religion with the most positive approach to all aspects of human life, holds the best promise of enrichment for the earthly life of mankind as a whole. Those Gentiles, therefore, who have this larger salvation at heart, should be made acquainted with what Judaism has to offer, and should be invited to cast in their lot with the household of Israel.

THAT this mission should find quick success is too much to hope for, and it is not seriously suggested that the next decade or two will see the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy that "ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

For one thing, it may take that long, if not longer, for Jews to set their own house in order for the outsider to feel its attraction. But it is precisely the thought of making Judaism "attractive," and the resultant stimulation for Jews to reconsider their own religious heritage, which might well be the first, and the most significant, by-product of re-opening this whole discussion of the "mission of Israel." For, after all, the serious consideration of a mission presupposes that the Jew is convinced in his own heart that he has something valuable to share with others. If this presupposition cannot be made, we need neither discuss the mission, nor would we be entitled to take the hope of Jewish "survival" very seriously. Conversely, however, if the Jew is convinced that Judaism is true, that the pattern of Jewish community life is valuable in terms of both individual and social fulfillment, then it is hard to see how he could reconcile with his religio-ethical tradition any attempt to withhold this boon from the rest of mankind.

In dealing with the "mission of Israel" in this, its "domestic" setting, it is precisely the present lack of a concrete platform, noted earlier, which must be our point of departure. Whether the contemporary denominational set-up within American Jewry will prove helpful in this context may be legitimately questioned. Coming into existence in response to a particular historical situation that no longer obtains, the denominations have to use all possible means of promotion and advertising to justify their separate existence in the eyes of the Jew born into their ranks. Whether the interested non-Jew who has decided to become a Jew will be more attracted by the group that worships without hat than by the one which is less like the church of his childhood is hardly an important question. Nor is it a question of the one or the other non-Orthodox group offering the more satisfactory theology, since the differences in theistic belief cut right across the denominational lines. And, apart from those who are forced to defend vested interests, it can no longer be seriously argued that one rather than another Jewish denomination is more essentially "American" and better suited to the environment. Ultimately it will have to be recognized that there are only two basic types of Judaism: the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox variety. The position of the former is already determined, and has been so for many centuries. It is the latter, in its several manifestations, which has promised to come to terms with present-day realities. A preoccupation with the practical "mission of Israel" may go a long way to making good this promise.

As any one in the educational field knows from his own experience, many a problem that has been unclear to the teacher will be clarified the moment he is charged with presenting it to his students. What the "mission of Israel" might accomplish for the Jews themselves could be conceived in very similar terms. Moreover, it might even be argued, as Leo Baeck has done, that a dedication to the idea of "mission," and it alone, can give Judaism the necessary dynamics for survival —now that the original impetus of both Reform and Zionism has lost itself in the complacency of achieved ambitions. A return to the idea of an active Jewish mission—apart from its ultimate benefit, as we believe, for humanity as a whole—might, therefore, well be the salvation of American Judaism in the fourth century of its existence.

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RE-VIEWING THE RUSSIAN MOVIES

The Person vs. Politics

ROBERT WARSHOW

A curse on all Marxists, and on all those who want to bring into all the relations of life hardness and dryness.—Lev Davidovich Bronstein (1896); quoted by Bertram D. Wolfe in *Three Who Made a Revolution.*

SIX of the famous movies of the Russian Revolution have been shown recently in New York. Five of them are among the most celebrated products of what we have all agreed to call the great age of the Soviet cinema: Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg,* Dovzhenko's *Earth,* and Eisenstein's *Potemkin, Ten Days That Shook the World,* and *The General Line.* The sixth, *Tsar to Lenin,* is a collection of authentic pictures of actual people and events taken by perhaps a hundred different photographers—newsreel and military cameramen and amateurs, including the Czar himself and members of his circle.

I had seen most of these movies at one time or another, but none of them for at least fifteen years, and I went this time looking very consciously for the pathos and irony of that enormous historical failure which now weighs so dangerously on us all. Irony, God knows, was easy enough to find; every glimpse of the enthusiasms of that revolution brings forth all at once the whole wearisome joke of human aspiration and wickedness—we shall be having it dinned into our ears, in just this form, until we die. There was more irony than the most avid of paradox-mongers could possibly want. Only to see the word "comrades" or the word "workers" in a subtitle was enough. Before I was through I could no longer even understand why our age insists on finding the idea of irony so attractive. I would have given up all ironies, and the sense of tragedy and the sense of history along with them, just to have stupid, handsome Nicholas grinding his heel once more into the face of unhappy Russia.

Pathos was another matter. For pathos there must be victims, and in five of these six movies the glare of triumphant righteousness is so blinding that one can't see any victims at all, only a few martyrs of the working class, their lives well expended, and a few bourgeois or monarchist anachronisms, swept properly into the dustbin of history. No death is without meaning; even that baby hurtling in its carriage down the Odessa steps in *Potemkin* is part of the great plan, and the spectacle is exciting but not saddening. Of course it could be said that Eisenstein and Pudovkin and Dovzhenko were the real victims, ultimately betrayed by the revolution they celebrated; but that idea, if it is important at all, becomes important only on reflection. It is hard to feel the pathos of their lives when you see them playing with corpses; if they had got the chance, they would have made a handsome montage of my corpse too, and given it a meaning—their meaning and not mine.

I do not say that these films of the famous Russian directors left me unmoved, but what

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THIS is the last essay ROBERT WARSHOW wrote, published exactly as he left it. At the time of his death he was still working on it, and it was left unfinished. Mr. Warshow, who died on March 18, 1955, at the age of thirty-seven, had been an editor of COMMENTARY since shortly after its inception. He was born and brought up in New York City, and attended the University of Michigan. He had already made a name for himself as a writer on the films with contributions to *Partisan Review, Encounter, Der Monat, Preuves,* and other periodicals as well as to this magazine. Anchor Books (Doubleday) plans to bring out a collection of his essays in the near future.

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I felt was all the wrong things, anger more than anything else. And it is just the best elements that arouse the greatest anger. When Eisenstein photographs the slow raising of the bridge in *Ten Days That Shook the World,* with a dead woman's hair stretched over the crack between the two sides as they come apart, and a dead horse hanging in its harness higher and higher above the river as the bridge goes up, the whole slow sequence being further protracted by the constant cutting in of other shots in "rhythmic" contrast, these controlled elements that once marked Eisenstein's seriousness as an artist become now the signs of an essential and dangerous frivolity which, one suspects, was a part of what made him an artist in the first place (and which is exhibited also in the intolerable pedantry of his theoretical writings). And when Pudovkin in *The End of St. Petersburg* cuts rapidly back and forth from scenes of fighting at the front to scenes of excitement in the stock exchange, one's anger is mingled with shame: this sequence is mentioned with honor in the histories of the cinema.

To be honest, I must say that I had come with some hope of finding that the pretensions of the great Soviet cinema were false. Since I had never, in fact, quite accepted those pretensions, it may not count for much to say that these films seemed to me, in aesthetic terms, as successful as ever. But I do mean that they belong with what we are accustomed to call great films, which is to say that they are crude, vulgar, often puerile, but yet full of sudden moments of power. The scene of the Odessa steps, for instance, deserves all the praise that has been given to it, and perhaps even justifies a recent attempt by Timothy Angus Jones (*Encounter,* January 1955) to establish *Potemkin* as an "epic," especially when one recalls that epic is often an expression of barbarism and superstition. It was not at all an aesthetic failure that I encountered in these movies, but something worse: a triumph of art over humanity. It made me, for a while, quite sick of the art of the cinema, and sick also of the people who sat with me in the audience, *mes semblables,* whom I suspected of being either cinema enthusiasts or Communists—and I wasn't always sure which was worse. (In fact the audiences were unusually silent at most of these movies, and for all I know may have been suffering the same emotions as I was.)

IT HAS been said often that the great achievement of the early Soviet cinema was its grasp of the impersonal, of the drama of "masses" and "forces." It was a new art, for a new age, in which the individual was seen to have his truest being as part of the mass. The real hero of these movies is history. But if there is one thing we should have learned from history—and from the history of the Russian Revolution above all—it is that history ought to be nobody's hero. When it is made into a hero, it is not even history any more, but falsehood. There is something peculiarly appropriate in Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's fondness for architectural and statuary symbolism. Eisenstein represents the rising of the workers, for instance, with a famous montage of three stone lions, one asleep, the second with its head lifted, and the third rising to its feet; by projecting these images in rapid succession, he creates the impression of a single lion stirred into action. This is another example of montage that is mentioned with honor in the textbooks, usually with the information that the three lions were not even photographed in the same city, a fact which is supposed to cast light on the question of whether the cinema is an art. The use of the stone lion is, indeed, a clever and "artistic" idea, but it is also fundamentally cheap, and in both respects it is characteristic of Eisenstein, and of the Soviet cinema generally. What we want most, that cinema rarely gives us: some hint of the mere reality of the events it deals with. The important point about the lions is that all the "art" of their use depends on the fact that they are not alive.

Against the films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, *Tsar to Lenin* has at least the advantage of not being a work of art or even, in the

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usual sense, a documentary. This is not to say that it is completely artless. The material, gathered over a period of years from a multitude of sources, was carefully arranged and, no doubt, carefully selected. The sequences are presented as much as possible in chronological order, and there is a spoken commentary by Max Eastman (the pictures themselves, of course, are without sound). At one point there is even a rudimentary "montage," contrasting the homely and unassuming Kalinin with the aloof and splendidly uniformed Czar. I don't suppose, either, that the process of selection rested solely on the objective interest of the material. It is notable, for instance, that the only pictures of an execution show the shooting of Communist prisoners by soldiers of Kolchak's army; on the Bolshevik side there is only a photograph of the room in which the Czar and his family were killed, and a brief glimpse of the head of the Cheka, identified by the commentator as "the incorruptible Dzerzhinsky." (What can it mean to call a political mass murderer "incorruptible"?) Again, in contrast to *Ten Days That Shook the World,* where the existence of Trotsky is never even acknowledged (except for a brief shot of an unnamed figure with the familiar pointed beard shown vaguely "plotting" against Lenin), this film takes perhaps special care to document as fully as possible Trotsky's role as a Bolshevik leader and as commander of the Red Army; the face of that "bloody-minded professor" is the most persistent image in the film. Nor are we spared the ineffable vulgarities of Communist rhetoric; indeed they are more oppressive here than in the other films because the commentary is spoken and we must endure to hear Max Eastman expressing the sentiments of 1937 in the very tones of 1937. "Kerensky had completely ignored the fundamental demand of the masses." "Lenin explained his purpose to the masses." "Kolchak was totally incapable of understanding the situation." "Trotsky proclaimed: 'Kerensky is a tool of the landlords and capitalists! All power to the Soviet!'" This is the language we once listened to with patience. I would have felt sorry for Max Eastman—who after all made no montages of corpses—if I had not been feeling more sorry for myself. Still, perhaps it would be no better if the sentiments were those of 1955. The commentator is one of the diseases of our time and must be endured; he will be there at the end of the world to say into a microphone: "This is the end of the world." But his greatest power lies not in what he says but in his tone of healthy intelligence; Max Eastman has at any rate a certain nervousness in his speech which makes one wish to forgive him.

WHAT matters chiefly in *Tsar to Lenin* is simply that the pictures it presents are in the most primitive sense true. This is not "history" any more than it is art; it is no more than a fragmentary record of appearances. But after all the ideology and all the art, that may be the best we can hope to have; if it does not contain the truth of history, whatever that may be, it does allow us to know the pathos of history, the mere fact that enormous things have happened and human beings have been involved in them. The crowds that throng the cold Russian streets in this movie are the crowds that really saw the Czarist government fall. They are not "the masses" and they do not enter upon the screen in pleasing and meaningful patterns established by a director seeking to express "the masses." Watching them, it is easy to accept the remark of a British observer, quoted by Eastman: "Nothing like these crowds was ever seen before in Europe" —whereas Eisenstein's crowds make you think most of how brilliantly he has "handled" them. You can look at a face in these crowds and say: that man was really there. Is this important? It must be important.

There was even a brief shot of a man I had met: Victor Chernov, a member of Kerensky's government. When I was a child I sat once at the dinner table while the exiled Chernov talked in Russian with the grown-ups. He seemed to me a wonderfully big and strong man, with a great voice and beautiful white hair. I knew nothing, really, of who he was or what he had done, and I could not

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understand a word that was said. I stared at him for that hour or so and thought: he was there, he was part of it. Chernov died only a while ago in New York—by then, I suppose, a commonplace figure among the Social Democrats—but I never saw him again except in this movie, where he looks still like a big and strong man. Kerensky himself is still alive somewhere in New York, and no doubt I could arrange to meet him if it were important to me. Maybe it ought to be important. He "completely ignored the fundamental demand of the masses," we are told, and so played his part in what has happened to us; one could ask him what he thought he was doing. But he has already written his answer, I believe, and I have never bothered to read it. What answer he might give could bring us closer to the thing we want to know? It is enough to have him fixed on the screen; a small, not quite handsome man smiling down upon a crowd in St. Petersburg, or holding a bouquet that some admirer has pressed on him, or finally, an exile in Paris, composing his features for the camera in an absurd pose of depth and resolution. The selection of pictures is manifestly unfair to him, but what we see is Kerensky nevertheless—another man who was there. (With Eisenstein, in *Ten Days that Shook the World,* he is portrayed—by an actor—as a posturing fool who dreams of being a dictator; once he is shown brooding at his desk below a bust of Napoleon. He has had the last laugh on Eisenstein at ony rate.)

There is also Nicholas II. Rather short, it seems, but very handsome with his neat features and beautiful beard, dignified, clean, inhumanly composed. My mother was born on the day his grandfather was assassinated, and eight or nine years later she was taken to America; my father, a young man of twenty or so, left Russia two or three years after Nicholas came to the throne; but Czar of Russia is still the name of an enemy, upholder of superstition and maker of pogroms. And yet he was not always thinking about how to oppress the Jews, or even about how to oppress the Russians. We see him here at play with his friends and his family. Once there is some kind of romp in a field, with the young man trying to catch the girls and making them fall down in the grass; the Czar does not himself engage in this sport, but looks on, one hand behind his back. Another time there is an incomprehensible ball game, with innumerable balls lying about on the ground; now and then somebody picks one up and seems to throw it at somebody else, but there is a certain awkwardness about the whole thing and it looks like a very dull game. Once the Czar goes swimming with his men friends; they are naked, and when the Czar stands up in the shallow water, exposing his behind, Max Eastman says, "This is the first time in history that a king has been seen as he really is." At other times the Czar is shown in his imperial role: reviewing his guard; walking in solemn procession with a robed priest; visiting the front. In a number of these scenes the Czarevich is beside him, a thin pinched boy, learning how to be a Czar. Once the Czarevich appears by himself, perhaps no more than nine years old, dressed in a Cossack uniform with a little sword; an officer lifts him onto a horse and he is allowed to ride around a little; Max Eastman remarks, "The Czarevich was probably the best-spoiled child in the world." Well, the Bolsheviks did not spare the rod: a little later there is a picture of the Czar with his whole family—four daughters, the Czarina, and the Czarevich—and Eastman announces in the loud flat tone of one who has understood and assimilated all: "Eighteen months later all seven of them were shot in a cellar in Ekaterinburg!"—he calls it "Yuhkadderinburg." The Czar and his family, like Kolchak later on, were "totally incapable of understanding the situation," and history exacts a penalty for such incapacity, even of young boys with hemophilia. Though Eastman does not mention it, the Bolsheviks also shot in that cellar in Ekaterinburg the Czar's servants and his doctor and when the shooting was over the executioners trampled on the bodies and smashed them with the butts of their rifles. No doubt if there had been no revolution

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and the Czarevich had become Czar, he would have been a bigot and a despot like his father. Also, no doubt, he would have died young, of hemophilia.

OF LENIN and Trotsky I had hoped for more than the mere sense of their presence. I think I was even looking for something that could be called "the face of revolution," and of course it wasn't there; only Eisenstein ever gives us anything like that, and what he gives is a falsehood. Yet one cannot pretend, either, to see these two figures "pure"; the revolution does envelop them like a cloud, and we look at them now through its thirty-eight-years' thickness of disaster. When Lenin poses informally for the camera in a sunny courtyard, smiling, relaxed, his hands in his pockets and a workingman's cap on the back of his head, it is easy enough to see that he must have been a man of grace and charm, only it is no longer easy to be interested in his grace and his charm. I found him more "real" in his embattled postures: for instance when he harangues a crowd in the street, a black figure full of dangerous energy "explaining his purpose to the masses"; we do not hear his voice, of course, but the movements of his face are enough; we know in what language and what tones these "explanations" were offered. Trotsky's energy is less "elemental" than Lenin's, sharper and more nervous. We see him rushing around to his fourteen fronts, and the commentator reads us passages from his proclamation: "Without Czarist officers, bureaucrats, and capitalists, our country will live a peaceful and happy life. . . . Death to the hirelings of foreign capital!" Trotsky's little pedant's face is like the point of a weapon. His followers used to speak of him affectionately as "the Old Man," but that was when he was in exile and could no longer kill anybody.

They broke their eggs and they made their omelette. But history was waiting for them too, just as if they were no better than the little spoiled Czarevich with his hemophilia. There is one very brief shot of the Great Muzhik who was to inherit: a heavy dark man standing at the very edge of a group, looking as if he is not quite sure where he fits in. Eastman says: "Nobody then dreamed. . . ." No, nobody did. Perhaps even Lenin and Trotsky were totally incapable of "understanding the situation."

What it means to break eggs we can perceive in the scene of the shooting of prisoners. That the victims are Communists and the executioners anti-Communist is of no importance. It could have been the other way around, or it could have been another war in another country: the firing squad is a leitmotif of modern history as the gallows was a leitmotif of the history of earlier times. Europe is covered with these graves where ten, twenty, or a thousand people lie dead together in pits that they themselves dug before they were shot.

The prisoners, twelve or fifteen of them, lie on their bellies on the ground under the guns of their captors; the land seems to stretch out flat and empty for limitless miles behind them. From what one can see of their faces, they are all quite young. Their shoes are collected from them, presumably for the use of Kolchak's soldiers. One of the prisoners raises his head and says something mocking to whoever is taking the picture. Max Eastman says in a tone of exaltation: "The Red soldier laughs!" Then the prisoners stand quietly, three at a time, at the edge of the grave. When they are shot, their hats fly ludicrously into the air and they fall backwards into the grave ungracefully and with astonishing speed; it is hard to believe, at first, that that is all there is to it. After each shooting the executioners walk up to the grave and look in to make sure the victims are dead; once or twice an additional shot is needed. Two of the prisoners wish to stand with their backs to the firing squad, but for some reason that is not proper and there is a pause while one of the executioners gently takes hold of their arms and turns them around. When it is the turn of the prisoner who had laughed, there is still something like a smile on his face, and Max Eastman again breaks the silence: "The Red soldier is *still* laughing!" But in a moment there are

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those little puffs of smoke from the rifles and the laughing soldier is in the grave with the rest of them.

To watch the suffering and death of real people in a movie is an ambiguous experience, and it would be a kind of moral outrage to make that experience an object of art criticism. All that must be said is that in this movie scene of the death of twelve or fifteen young men, nothing triumphs and nothing is "understood"; it is a record of something that happened. Even the one prisoner's laughter in the face of the firing squad, if it was a triumph at all, was his own triumph; it did not matter in the last moments of his life that the revolution was going to succeed, and as we watch the scene now it does not matter that the revolution failed. What is offensive about Max Eastman's comments is that they are too ready to claim this man's death for something beyond itself; for the workers, or the revolution, or for the two great breakers of eggs, or simply for the human spirit—it doesn't matter what particular claim is made. I do not say that such claims may not be valid, but they are valid only at a distance, not *while* the man dies; the death we watch belongs to the man alone.

YET it is not fair to complain of Max Eastman. One need only think of what one of the great Russian directors might have done with a scene like this in order to appreciate how utterly vulgar art and belief can be, sometimes, when measured against the purity of a real event. There are innumerable examples of such vulgarity in the Russian cinema, moments when the director, taken up with his role as an artist who controls and interprets—few artists have put a higher value on that role than the early Soviet film directors—forgets what is really at stake and commits an offense against humanity. I have already mentioned examples from the work of Eisenstein and Pudovkin. Let me offer another from Dovzhenko's *Earth,* a movie about the collectivization of agriculture.

Dovzhenko is celebrated as the great "lyricist" of the Soviet cinema, and to judge by this film—I have seen no others of his—the title is largely deserved. *Earth* is beautifully photographed and composed, full of dreamy evocations of the slow, patient life of the Russian peasantry skillfully contrasted with the more urgent movement of the "new life" of progress, optimism, and tractors. There are wonderful close-ups of peasant faces, at once appealing and frightening in their rigidity and incomprehension. One scene of a peasant household getting up in the morning could hardly be surpassed in its presentation of both the squalor of peasant life and its indestructibleness. And throughout the film there is the sense of limitless land and limitless time, and of the constant possibility of violence. One begins to understand from this film the overheated and equivocal fascination which the peasants held for the Russian intelligentsia; if these dumb and alien figures were to be accepted as human at all, then the temptation was great to make of them something quintessentially human. I thought I could understand also, for the first time, what it must have meant to the Jews to live among these peasants in continual expectation of their rage. It must be added that Dovzhenko's picture of the peasants and the countryside is often grossly sentimental—the "beautiful" death of the old peasant Semyon at the beginning of the movie is the clearest example of this—and that the painfully restrained tempo of his direction produces long passages of almost unbearable tedium. Nevertheless Dovzhenko shows himself a serious artist responding sensitively to his material. Compared to this, Eisenstein's *The General Line,* another film about the collectivization of agriculture, is the work of a skilled hack and a philistine.

But Dovzhenko's virtues are all connected with a certain passivity. He is most successful in presenting the life of the peasants when he is willing to accept it as something irremediably "given" and devote himself to recording its meaningful appearances; even his sentimentality, though it is partly dishonest like all sentimentality, is not so much an active falsification of the material as a

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willfully excessive surrender to it. Whenever he assumes a more active posture—which is to say, whenever he becomes fully an "artist" in the sense in which the Soviet film directors understood that term—his work takes on as glassy and inhuman a brilliance as Eisenstein's. In *Earth,* this quality is to be seen most clearly in the funeral of the young peasant Vasili, the leader of the "progressive" peasants who has been murdered by a resentful "reactionary."

At the desire of Vasili's father, who has at last understood what his son was trying to do, the body is carried to its grave by a procession of energetic young people singing songs of the "new life." We have seen these young people often: strong forearms, open collars, "healthy" and rather empty faces lit up with purpose and conviction—every "movement" puts them on its posters to symbolize the "new life" that will make us all twenty again. They carry Vasili's body as if it were a banner. As the open coffin passes beneath the trees, branches laden with fruit brush the face of the corpse. While the procession moves on its way, a woman back in the village is taken with labor and goes indoors to have her baby: one man is dead, another is born. At the grave, one of the young men makes a speech in which he says that Vasili "gave his blood for the new life" and that Vasili's death has "sealed the death warrant of our enemies"; to the dead man's father he says: "Do not be sad and do not worry—Vasili was a hero!" In the meantime the murderer, seized with remorse, has been running across the field to catch up with the procession; at last he bursts out on a hill beyond the crowd and screams his confession: "I killed him! I am the murderer! I killed Vasili!" But not a head turns; they are all listening to the funeral oration. The murderer, like all enemies of the people, simply does not exist; he has become, in Orwell's word, an "unperson," and even his remorse is of no interest to anybody. Thus failing to attract attention to himself, the murderer continues his mad flight into the distance, diminishing to a tiny insect-like figure at the very bottom of the screen, dancing back and forth in a ridiculous frenzy, while above him rises the vast landscape of fruitful Russia.

[*Left unfinished.*]

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THE SECRET PROFESSION

A Story

RUTH STONE

THE thin man of indeterminate age who was inquiring his way near the campus carried a large notebook and several thick volumes. He held these close to his side under his right arm and leaned from his hips forward, his skinny neck thrust out from a loose collar.

"Might this be the residence of Dr. Freed?" He stood looking toward Margery who was down on her knees in a flower garden. "I see I've come to the wrong place." He supplicated toward heaven with weary frustration and turned as if to go. It was the sunken lip which gave him the look of an old man. His upper teeth were missing and his words came out with a mushy sound; his nose, which bent down, came very close to meeting his lower lip.

Margery, in spite of misgivings, put down her garden shears and came to the gate. "May I help you?" She smiled and pushed back her hair with fingers still deep in pudgy garden gloves.

The young man—he now appeared to be a shattered thirty—raised his head. His eyes were clouded with glasses but behind their owl-dark rims she saw a gathering of weak tears.

"I'll go away," he said. "I'm very tired, I won't bother you further."

"You wished to see someone?" Her voice was gently helpful.

"I am a student of literature," he said. "I have come a good distance to converse with Dr. Freed."

"I'm afraid he isn't home. Perhaps I can help you?" She was a kindly girl, impulsive, overly sympathetic. She held open the gate. "Come in and sit in the shade. If I can help you. . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"Well, I don't know if you've heard of me," said the young man, cocking his head on one side with a discreet sly smile. "Finebein. Harrison Finebein. I'm somewhat famous, that is I write. I've had many works published; I am, I can say, in my way well known, and that is why I wanted to talk to your husband. That is, you are, I take it, Mrs. Freed?"

Margery wanted to reply but the words were lost in his next question.

"You have perhaps children?"

"Two daughters," said Margery, aware of the solid earth again; she adored her daughters. "Elizabeth, she's the. . . ."

"Two lovely daughters," went on the famous man, "a garden, many lovely flowers. Might I inquire if you planted these yourself? Of course, I'm a single man, myself," he hastened to add. "I get by, with a little savings. It goes, but there is some talk of a grant. People are working on these angles."

"I love to garden." Margery automatically pulled off a dried flower from the marigolds which were splendid in the fall sunlight.

"And you write, too?" He leaned forward eagerly like a turtle coming out from between his collar plates and smiled again showing his bare upper gums with little ridges where the teeth had been. Again it was a knowing smile. Again he cocked his head slightly, his eyebrows lifted, acknowledging the secret profession. "You write, yourself?"

RUTH STONE, who is at present living in Poughkeepsie, New York, where her husband teaches at Vassar, was born in Roanoke, Virginia, and educated at the University of Illinois. Her poetry has appeared in many of the leading literary reviews, but this is her first published story. *Poetry Magazine* awarded her the Bess Hokin prize for 1953. Mrs. Stone's work has also been included in *The New Pocket Anthology of American Verse.*

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"Of course," said Margery self-consciously, "I write." She stood uncertainly looking down at him. He leaned back in the metal garden chair which he had taken quite easily, and crossed his knees. The chair, a tubular rocker, all of one piece, would dip and rise under pressure.

"Perhaps you teach, too?" He looked at her and bounced the chair gently. "You went to Harvard, too? I see by the catalogue that Dr. Freed went to Harvard." He punctuated his remarks with nods. "You think this school is as good as Harvard? It is, yes?"

"Well," said Margery, "I would hesitate. . . ."

"It's big," he said, considering. "Big agriculture school, big engineering school. Now about my schooling." His voice dropped; he took a pencil out of his coat pocket and tapped his notebook. "Educated in Europe," he said, "left Europe, and went to England; there was some thought of sending me to Oxford, but that didn't work out. My aunt has a millinery business in England, hats for the queen, but I didn't work out in the business. I couldn't work, I can't work—" he shook his head, amused. "So—" and as he smiled once more, she observed the black stains on his lower teeth. Every tooth was coated at the base.

"Well, you see how it is. Confidentially, I came here, had to go through high school again, went through college, then"—he took a breath—"worked for Treasury Department, Public Library (at present I am on leave). Well, one thing led to another." He paused to cough, and she felt a moment of darkness as she saw a disgusting cavern in which his tongue lapped helplessly against the embarrassingly naked gum.

He leaned back and placed his books and notebook more comfortably. His suit, much too large, extended beyond his shoulders; his frame seemed emaciated, his face sunken beneath the cheekbones; his nose, which bent down so perilously close to his chin, was blue white and like a cleaver. It was revolting in the pallor of his face for his lips to be thin red lines, wet-looking, because the upper lip sank behind the lower lip and was in a way inside the mouth part of the time. She saw that his pants cuffs were beginning to wear.

He continued, "I do not know if you have an interest in libraries? The library school here is very fine, there is Dr. Gustus, very fine, much emphasis on filing systems; there is Dr. Naman, a woman (bookbinding)—now in my discussions with her we have come to some excellent conclusions."

Margery stared off through the syringa bushes and sounded the well of her pity. Hollow and dry, she waited for a gush of emotion.

He looked at her wonderingly. "You went to Harvard? Perhaps you teach?"

"No," she said, "I don't teach."

"But you read?" he pressed. "You write. It was suggested to me that I try library school. There's a big demand for librarians now. But I don't know, it's a fact, it seems to me, for the library, women are more suited to that work. Again, perhaps you won't agree with me, but I found library school dull, limiting. Fine for some, but for me, constricting." He raised his head back as he spoke and looked thoughtfully into the tree above. "Take history, take the Napoleonic wars, take the French Revolution, the Second World War, the A-bomb. I like to consider modern man; it's exciting. So," he concluded, stretching out the "so," "I got out of library. Now I'm in Spanish." He shrugged his sparrow-like shoulders. "You may think it's odd, since I know German, my native tongue, that I go into Spanish, but there's a big demand for Spanish, it's a big field. Now as to my writing, and I may say that I know such men as Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel, I've corresponded with them." He waited for the effect of this to sink in.

"My goodness," she said, "what sort of thing do you write?"

"Poems," he said, "short stories, essays, novels, biographies. I've won a few medals, had my picture in the paper. It isn't always easy. Of course I'm a single man myself, so I get by. I have my savings. There is talk of a teaching post; I have a man work-

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ing on it." He brought the tip of his pencil down on his notebook. "Do you teach?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "my husband, you know."

"Yes, yes, writing, I see, by the catalogue. I want to talk to him about my literary work. I had in mind," he said, "a literary group. That may sound European to you, it's a new idea to you?"

"My husband, that is Dr. Freed, writes novels." She hesitated among these words. Ridiculous to speak of Henry's writing with this man. She turned in her mind and felt for an easy escape. To be unkind, to cut down with briskness; but she was kind and always faltered. "He writes and teaches too, you know," she spoke as though to a child, and remained standing to allow him the opportunity to rise and go. She snipped a bit here and there with the garden shears, and drew off her gloves and shook the dirt from the fingers.

"I had in mind a literary group," he repeated, "a group of artists, does that sound European to you? Foreign, perhaps?"

In her mind she picked up the folders (stiff spring backs in solid black) of Henry's novels, long novels, thick books which he wrote at furious speed, often forgetting the names of his characters as he went along and changing their physiques capriciously. Also he never finished them. They made an imposing sight and when boxed were most expensive to mail, always much too valuable for slow freight. They took them along whenever they moved, with their children and personal luggage. Often, in the midst of a tour, Henry would ask her where they were and rested easier when he knew they were safe with the spare tire in the trunk of the car. He hoped to strike oil, he said. He knew how much had been made on *Gone With the Wind*.

Mr. Finebein waited for her to answer. She stood carefully tearing apart a blade of grass. For a moment her impulse was to tell him about her group. It had been her idea to have a group of writers meet once a week to read their recent works to one another. There were five of them, all unpublished authors; as a matter of fact they each had only a few poems, a few short stories. The idea was to stimulate writing. Margery thought she would write more if she had an audience. But she checked her impulse.

"Are your parents here?" said Margery after a pause in which Mr. Finebein surveyed the flower garden.

"Dead," he answered. "They cooked them."

"O dear," Margery gasped.

"You have a lovely garden," he said. "Does one pluck the flowers?"

She stared uncomprehending for a moment. "Would you like to have some?" she asked.

He nodded. "If it would be your pleasure."

She picked up the shears and turned to the bed of zinnias, feeling the heat of the sun, the afternoon getting sticky and too hot as it does in September.

"Here," she said, recklessly snipping the last of the zinnias and the best marigolds. "There now, that is a good bouquet." She handed them to him. "Oh," she reached to take them back, "let me take out that white one. It's starting to die."

"Never mind, never mind." He gestured with his hand depreciatingly, and held to the bouquet, but his tone implied that for him a dead flower was an insult.

"Do you live near the campus?" asked Margery, trying to fit Mr. Finebein into the world.

"I have a room, a landlady; however, it's difficult, the expense and all. I use my savings." He seemed suffused with a deep sense of injustice. "Now the European universities," he said, "would have welcomed me. The University of Chicago, one supposes, has no care for enrollment." He looked at her piercingly. "Can they survive?"

"Did you want to go there?" Margery asked gently.

"They couldn't see it," he said. "I don't know what their trouble was."

MARGERY put her hand thoughtfully to her face. "I know what we'll do. I'll

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take you by Henry's office. We can all talk over a cup of coffee."

He became alert. "You have two cars? You each have your own car perhaps?" His eager look, his tone implied that here at least was opulence. "I myself have no car," he said. "How tired I am, coming all this long distance, walking; it is very exhausting." He put his head down on his hand and stared at his notebook. He really looked like a man resting after a long journey. He seemed so comfortable in the garden chair, in this way accepting the peace of her garden and the chair for his own.

Margery gave a light protesting snicker. "We have one old car, an old wreck, but it runs. Now if you'll wait here a moment, I'll check on a few things and we'll be off." She felt stagey, speaking unreal lines, and walked stiffly into the house carefully locking the door behind her. Inside she went softly to the phone and dialed Henry's office.

"Hello, dear," she whispered when he answered. When phoning and at partings they used endearments. "Darling," she whispered.

"What? Can't hear you."

"Nothing too bad, but yes, yes it is—it's awful."

"Darling, what's up?" cried Henry. His voice rattled the receiver. "What is the matter with you?" Even in anxiety Henry was apt to accuse her.

She moderated her voice. "I have a student here who's looking for you."

"For God's sake!" His disgust entered her ear and settled in her stomach.

"Tell him I'm busy." Henry was writing a research paper. "I'm working!"

He didn't enjoy his work. Research tortured him but "competition," said the head of the English department, "weeded the staff."

Margery cupped her hand around the mouthpiece. "I can't make him go away. I think he's crazy." She looked out the window. Mr. Finebein still rocked gently in their chair.

"What?" Henry made the receiver seem vicious. Margery knew he heard.

"Insane," she hissed. "Insane. Paranoid." She often felt a clear ability to diagnose.

"For God's sake!" said Henry.

"So I'm coming by because I don't know how to get rid of him. I thought we might have coffee and then take him home." She paused. "He says he's a famous writer," she said significantly.

"All right, all right," Henry was resigned. She waited for him to hang up. Then she brushed her hair and changed her dress and put on French high heels and checked the time. The girls would be in school another hour. She slung a purse strap over her shoulder and went out. She thought her visitor was asleep; he sat with his head bent. "Ready, Mr. Finebein?" she said a little uncertainly. "The car's this way." She pointed vaguely toward the street.

HE SEEMED loath to leave the chair. He had been writing in his notebook. "Here," he said, tapping the notebook, "I have made a list for you of my works." He handed her the notebook conclusively.

The titles were in quotations. She read, "Poem to America"—"The Modern Poems"—"The Greek Poems"—"A Nosegay of Flowers"—"Essays on Religious Subjects"—"A Volume of Short Stories"—"A Critical Study of Modern Europe"—"Adrift in the World Tide."

"The last is a novel I am working on," he said. "The first is a volume of poems; the title poem is about this great country. There are I should say about two hundred pages of poetry." He pursed his lips, businesslike. "Second is a book of sonnets. Modern style. The third, sonnets in classical tradition. Fourth, modern verse. Then there are essays on related subjects, philosophy, religion, political thinking, the plight of man. The short stories cover a great range of ideas. Each story is approximately twenty-five thousand words long. The study is a history of Europe, beginning with the French Revolution and bringing it down to modern times. The novel is in progress." He tapped the notebook with his pencil. He certainly did not want to get up out of the chair. He

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shook himself together and put his pencil and notebooks in order. It was a little like coaxing an old dog off the doorstep. He slowly elevated himself, separated himself from the chair and followed Margery, stopping at the wrong car, a new Ford, so that Margery had to call, "This one, Mr. Finebein, this old one." It was frankly dirty and a front tire bulged with a boot. He entered with an unexpected delicate air, and sitting beside her pointed out the buildings of the campus as they drove down the tree-shaded streets. "The gymnasium," he announced, "the Animal Science building." The car smoked and overheated almost immediately. Margery hated the scratch of the horsehair stuffing in her back where the seat cover had worn off. She wheeled rapidly up to the ancient hall where Henry hid himself from the world. He was there in one of the small rooms with a morose office mate, tapping on his typewriter; or perched back in his straight chair with the two front legs off the floor, he was jeering at student papers; or he might be reading one of the articles of those arch rivals, his colleagues.

She pressed the horn button and a hoarse cry arose from the bowels of the engine.

"He'll be down," she reassured her rider. He nodded and waited passively for the act he had set in motion to shape around him. Presently Henry came around the corner of the building, jaunty, slightly embarrassed. He came around the back of the car to the driver's side. He was not imposing-looking. His double-breasted business suit needed pressing. He wore perpetually a reserved expression to dress a quite ordinary face. He was exactly average in height.

"I had better get in back," said Mr. Finebein, stepping out and in again.

Henry gently pushed Margery out of the driver's seat. "Hello," he greeted the air, turning half around.

"Mr. Finebein, dear," said Margery, "wants to talk to you about his writing."

"Well, now, where shall we go?" asked Henry genially, testing the motor with his foot and checking the dashboard. "Heated up," he said. "Did you put oil in her?" and raising his voice: "To the coffee shop, Mr. Finebein?"

"At your pleasure," said Mr. Finebein.

They went a few blocks further along the elm-lined street. Then they began looking for a proper hole in the line of cars at the curb.

"Just relax," said Henry, "here we are." He studied the curb, the distance, he pulled up and backed in twirling the wheel. Margery shifted her weight toward the door and turned her head away. In this way she managed to be true to the kindliness within her. Henry turned the key off, pulling the brake against Margery's leg. They walked in a loose line toward the corner shop, Mr. Finebein ambling along holding his books and notebook against his chest. An air-conditioned breeze swept against them as they opened the door, too cold, too sharp.

"Wow," said Henry, "feels good."

Margery shuddered.

Henry led the way to the back booth. It was in an ell corner shut off from the rest of the room. The room appeared distorted as though under green water. Margery blinked. She took hold of Henry's sleeve apologetically, "I'm afraid I feel odd." She pressed her temples with the tips of her fingers. "Could you get me some aspirin, like a dear?"

"Sure," said Henry and disappeared. Mr. Finebein sat across from Margery.

"I'm sorry you don't like my company," he said.

Margery stared.

"I guess I'd better be going," he said, "if I make you feel bad."

"Heavens, no!" Margery shook her head and pressed her temple again. "What an idea."

"Here you are." Henry handed her the metal box of aspirin. She took a tablet and tried to swallow it without water. It stayed in her throat turning it sour.

"Your wife's feeling ill," said Mr. Finebein. "A touch of Freud, perhaps? Perhaps she doesn't want my company?" There could be hardly any doubt that he was sneering.

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Henry laughed as if at a joke. Margery leaned forward from her side of the booth. "What was it like in Germany under Hitler?" she asked.

"Pure hell," said Mr. Finebein and closed his eyes.

"Did you live in Berlin?"

"No," said Mr. Finebein opening his eyes again and smiling, "I never saw the beautiful city."

There was a pause during which he offered no more information. Margery probed. "Where did you live?"

"Nuremberg," said Mr. Finebein. "Wiped out," he added.

"I'm not sorry for that," said Henry. "That's one city I don't regret."

"Mr. Finebein was a librarian in Chicago." Margery hoped to be tactful.

Henry felt his tie. "How are the libraries in Germany?" he asked politely.

"Frankly," said Mr. Finebein, "they lost a lot of books. Now they are cataloguing unpublished manuscripts. A great idea. Every manuscript is catalogued; they know where all unpublished works are."

Margery saw again Mr. Finebein's list, catalogued.

"What will it be, folks?" The student waiter tipped his white hat and shoved it back on his curls. "How's the writing course, Mr. Freed, sir?" He grinned; his teeth were full and square. He flexed his knees. "What'll it be, folks?"

Margery bent over the menu.

"Coffee for me," said Henry. "How about you, Mr. Finebein?"

"Whatever you desire for me," said Mr. Finebein. "It's up to you." He looked sternly at his books.

"How about a hamburger," suggested Margery, "or," she added, "could you eat hamburger, Mr. Finebein?"

"Tomorrow I fast," he said. "I'll pay for my own," he said in an injured tone.

"That's all right," Henry sounded hearty.

"A coke," said Mr. Finebein, "and some ice cream. Any kind, anything," he mumbled. "Strawberry maybe." While they waited he turned the pages of his notebook.

Mr. Finebein stirred his strawberry ice cream. He ate the melted part slowly, painfully. The ice cream became soup in the dish. Taking his pencil he added a quotation mark to the last of his list of writings. The list was upside down facing Henry.

"That's quite a list," said Henry. "Any published?"

"Frankly," said Mr. Finebein, "what do they want? How long," he went on turning down his mouth, "will the pocketbook last? For instance, I said to Professor Goldmark on the phone yesterday (I was told he was out to church but he came in), I said, 'I see by the catalogue you are a specialist in modern writing.' 'No,' he said, 'nothing but Renaissance; I can't help you,' he said. 'I'll have to cut this short,' he said, 'I have guests for breakfast.' A good Episcopalian," said Mr. Finebein, "a convert, I suppose."

"You're wrong," said Henry, "he's not a Jew."

"No?" said Mr. Finebein. "What else? Maybe I should convert?" he smiled at them both.

"Well, the list is imposing," said Henry. "But after all we can't discuss your writing without seeing it."

"I don't feel well," Margery whispered. In spite, or because, of the aspirin she couldn't focus. She studied Mr. Finebein with his list. It looked suspicious to her, that title, "A Nosegay of Flowers," written down just as he was looking at her flowers.

"You left your flowers in the car," she said.

Mr. Finebein pointed to the unused cream beside Henry's cup. "You forgot?" he asked.

"No," Henry said, "I don't use it."

Mr. Finebein took the cream and deftly poured it over the melted ice cream. He stirred it all around and slowly sipped it, spooning it into his mouth in dribbles. "Frankly," he said, "I am more interested in history, in the times of the French Revolution, and so on down to the present day. But it is difficult," he said, "although there are some people working in my behalf."

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"I'm afraid I have to get back to my office." Henry made a move to rise.

Mr. Finebein lapped up the last pink drop. They walked slowly while Henry stopped to pay the cashier. Mr. Finebein pointed to the magazine rack. "You read that stuff?"

Margery didn't answer.

Outside the air sparkled with dust. Mr. Finebein climbed into the back seat of the car. "Perhaps it would be out of your way?" he suggested. "I can walk."

"Nope," Henry was behind them, "glad to drive you."

"Three blocks down," said Mr. Finebein, "to your left. Perhaps we could arrange a meeting, Dr. Freed?" They were moving down the street.

"Well," said Henry, "yes, but not for a few weeks. I'm busy right now, have to finish some work. Perhaps next month."

They were both facing ahead. They didn't see Mr. Finebein's face.

"Or next semester?" added Mr. Finebein, "or next year? Let me out here," he ordered coldly. "There's my landlady."

Margery had the feeling he didn't want the landlady to see their car. She opened the door for him. "Goodbye," she said. Mr. Finebein didn't answer. He got out holding the bouquet of flowers and his books and notebook. He turned his head away from them and went behind the car. As they drove off he crossed the street without looking in their direction.

"He's angry," crooned Margery, "he's furious." For some reason, she didn't know what, maybe the aspirin, her voice was shaking.

"So much the better," said Henry.

"Insane," said Margery. "Don't you agree?"

Henry said nothing. He was shifting gears.

"I don't believe he lived in Nuremberg," said Margery. "Where's his accent?"

"Watch out what you're doing there, Bud," Henry muttered, glaring at a passing car. "Oh, he lived there all right." Henry made a deft turn, lurching Margery against the door.

"I'll tell you one thing," said Margery. "He hasn't written a line, not a line of that stuff. He made it all up. He goes around with that notebook making lists of titles. I doubt if he has written a line." She felt contaminated. A sense of universal failure welled up in her.

"Why don't you learn to drive?" she said.

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ART WORTH CELEBRATING

Two Tercentenary Shows of Jewish Painting and Sculpture

WILLIAM SCHACK

FOR half a century Jewish artists have played an important, even a pioneer, role in American art, yet the question whether there is anything specifically Jewish in their work has not been thoroughly explored. It has been evaded partly because it is an elusive question, leaning on other quicksilver questions: are there American Jewish characteristics at all? Can they be reflected in canvas and carving? If so, how do you recognize them? Partly, it is because American art as a whole was unsure of itself. Even the affirmation of the 1920's that there was a truly American art based on the American scene was defensively shrill. If there was doubt about the whole, who could think about the part—about the possibility of there being a separate Jewish wing in a non-existent American school of art? Now that this country's contemporary artists have secured a higher position in the world's regard than their counterparts of any previous period, we can take their Americanism for granted, leaving the way open for consideration of the always waiting "Jewish question."

The most complete answer could have been made if the year of the celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of Jewish settlement in the United States had provided a comprehensive review of the work of Jewish artists and craftsmen since Colonial days. But, though the time was opportune, apparently no organization was willing to sponsor, or perhaps had even thought of sponsoring, such a formidable study. Whether rewarding discoveries would have been made no one can say, but we might have had a fairly complete picture of the Jewish artists of the 20th century and at least a glimpse of the fifteen or twenty of the 19th whose names are no more familiar than that of Myer Myers, a master craftsman in silver of the 18th century. As it was, the two exhibitions of fine art formally presented in connection with the Tercentenary dealt only with contemporaries. But since it is only in the last fifty years that American Jews have advanced to a prominent place in painting, sculpture, and the graphic arts, these exhibitions, in conjunction with other accessible works, afford us a satisfactory basis for evaluating the Jewish quality of their art.

BUT first a brief survey to establish the fact of their importance in American art is necessary; and this has its implication as well for the question we are pursuing. It was at the historic Armory Show of 1913, arranged by a new association of artists in revolt against the National Academy of Design, that American Jewish artists first made their presence felt. This was the exhibition in which modern art made its debut in the United States to hisses, cat-calls, and groans which did not, however, quite drown out the curtain calls. In it flowed every current and cross-current, and, the whirlpool being a favorite Jewish swimming pool, the American Jewish artists, as eclectic as the rest of the American group, plunged in. They were also, incidentally, a typical mixture of the melting pot. There were the two Russian-born, Max Weber and Abraham Walkowitz, and the Italian-born Joseph Stella (whose

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THE old question, whether or not there is such a thing as Jewish art, receives a new answer here. WILLIAM SCHACK, a frequent contributor to the pages of COMMENTARY, is the author of a biography of the painter Eilshemius, *And He Sat Among the Ashes,* and writes for many periodicals. From 1929 to 1939 he was reviewer of Yiddish theater for the New York *Times.*

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"Brooklyn Bridge," now in the Whitney Museum, remains a triumph of early semi-abstract painting in this country). Round about were the Bulgarian-born Jules Pascin, a superb draftsmen who was to create a sensuous, half-drugged realism; the Hungarian-born Bernard Karfiol, a poetic realist; and the native Walt Kuhn, a more stolid one. There were Jacob Epstein (as draftsman), William Zorach (as painter), Ben Benn, Maurice Becker, and even two members of the Academy against which the group was revolting: the New Yorker Leon Kroll, and the Norwegian-born Jonas Lie, who was one day to become president of the Academy. In all, the Jewish artists in the Armory Show numbered more than thirty, of whom, over the years, quite a few dropped out of sight; and some leveled off too soon to make a significant contribution. But fifteen or so kept on striving for the high goals they had first set themselves.

All of these artists, whatever their aesthetic ideals, sought to develop their individual gifts, and if they were conscious of a common bond it was the bond of their Americanism, of their being in the mainstream of American art. In 1929, sixteen years after the Armory Show, the Museum of Modern Art, after its epoch-making inaugural exhibition of modern French masters, presented a "deliberately eclectic" group of paintings by nineteen living Americans "who it is believed are fairly representative of the principal tendencies in contemporary American painting." Included were Karfiol, Kuhn, Pascin, and Weber (who was to be honored by the Museum the following year with the first one-man show it gave to a living American), together with Eugene Speicher and Maurice Sterne. Six out of nineteen would justify some kind of flag-waving, but would the colors of that flag be other than the red, white, and blue? They were Americans, even the immigrants; their works were honored in this exhibition as American; and their Jewishness was "accidental" (even Weber's was submerged). Who cared that Karfiol and Weber were Jewish? Who even knew that Speicher and Kuhn and Pascin were Jews?

The "nineteen" provoked many challenges, friendly or bristling: everybody had his own preferred list. The magazine *The Arts* held a contest to see who would come closest to the nineteen best artists in the country on which the judges selected by the editors agreed. Both prize-winning lists were headed by Speicher and included Kuhn and Karfiol, with Sterne, Weber, Kroll, and Alexander Brook appearing once on either list.

One could go on with the new names of Jewish artists that cropped up every year—with those, for example, in the Museum of Modern Art's 1930 show of painters and sculptors under thirty-five. But this would only show, like the roster from the Armory Show, that they continued to integrate themselves in American art unconsciously. For more concrete insights into the possible Jewish qualities of the work of American Jewish artists, we can now profitably skip to the present, to examine the two exhibitions which marked the Tercentenary.

A LOCAL New York exhibition of oil paintings and a few prints was held at the 92nd Street YM and YWHA. Theoretically, it had a broader base, for it was called "Jewish Motifs by American Artists." But this epistle to the Gentiles was not productive: only four of the forty-seven artists represented were not Jewish. In quality the exhibition was disappointing, especially since the selection was made by Alfred Werner (whose writing is familiar to the readers of COMMENTARY). Of its forty-seven items, not more than half a dozen were of outstanding merit, and not more than half rose above mere competence. From a purely qualitative point of view, the show hardly justified singling out the American Jewish group for separate display.

That justification was provided, however, by a much larger show held under the auspices of the American Jewish Tercentenary. "The Contemporary Fine Arts Exhibit," as it was called, included oils, water colors, and sculpture. It was installed at the Riverside Museum in New York in October 1954, and scheduled to circulate through

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June 1955 in art galleries and museums in Philadelphia, Rochester (N.Y.), Dallas, Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Washington, D. C. This show (I'll refer to it hereafter as the "Contemporary") contained one hundred and ten items representing as many artists out of some seven hundred works submitted to the jury. Both exhibitions largely ignored the conservative wing, while yet favoring middle-of-the-road artists above the advance-guard. With ampler representation from both extreme wings and a few more inclusions from the middle camp as well as from among the recent dead (such as Karfiol, Elie Nadelman, and Arnold Friedman), both exhibitions would have more satisfactorily called the roll of the Jewish participants of some account in the American art of our time. The total would have come to about two hundred and fifty names, as compared with fifty-odd artists mentioned in George S. Hellman's article in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* in 1939, of whom only a handful (for a variety of reasons) would be included in the two hundred and fifty.

By contrast with the "Y" show, the "Contemporary" was a collection of masterpieces, and by any objective standard it was a group show of unusually sustained quality. Not only were most of the older and invited guests represented by good examples, but there were some thirty to forty meritorious pieces by artists whose names are known only to assiduous gallery-goers.

What, now, do all these artists mean *as a Jewish group* (since I am not concerned here with their relative merits)? For myself the blunt answer must be that they have no meaning in this sense, whether they are judged by the idiom in which they work, their subject matter, or the Jewish feeling they may—or may not, as I think—display. This last factor is of necessity highly subjective and elusive; and there may be those who perceive some kind of Jewish accent in more of the artists than I do. In any case, since whatever there is of it is expressed through the subject matter or the artist's manner of painting, I shall confine my discussion to these two factors.

Someone once developed the thesis that Jewish artists have come into their own in this era, not because of historic, political, or economic circumstances, but because the supposedly rationalistic abstract art of our time is so close to their spirit. I do not recall how he fitted Chagall and Soutine into his thesis, or what he made of the Jewish artists in this country who work over the whole gamut from literal naturalism through simplified realism to pure abstraction. To name only a few examples in each category: in the literal-naturalist group there are, in sculpture, Jo Davidson and Victor D. Brenner*; in the simplified-realism one, Chaim Gross, Minna Harkavy, and William Zorach; among the abstract and semi-abstract, Ibram Lassaw and Jacques Lipchitz. In painting, William Auerbach-Levy and Ivan Olinsky are in the first category; Sidney Laufman, Adolph Dehn, and Joseph Floch in the second; Louis Schanker and Adolph Gottlieb in the third. Outside these categories there are "Cubist" Expressionists (Abraham Rattner), Surrealists (Peter Blume), and unclassifiables (Paul Burlin). So it goes in every medium; and in the use of the medium there are painters like Jacques Zucker for whom the working of the paint itself is a means of enriching the canvas, while for others paint is color pure and simple.

But these different uses of the medium, which all but determine a man's art, are not the only sign that the artists have no common Jewish bond. Another, more obvious sign is their subject matter—their lack of concern with Jewish life. This view would seem to be refuted by the "Y" show, since it was based entirely on Jewish motifs; but that proved no more than that artists can occasionally work with Jewish themes if they want to or have to, just as, with a little more research, they could turn to Moslem or Buddhist themes. The real point is how

*For a sample of Brenner's work you have only to put hand in pocket or purse: he designed the Lincoln penny. Some people demurred that a Jew (born in Lithuania) should presume to such an honor, but then, the man born in a log cabin had presumed to migrate to a White House.

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often do they want to use Jewish subjects? The "Y" exhibition literally forced the issue: without a Jewish theme you couldn't get into it. It is therefore more significant to focus on the subject matter of the paintings and sculpture in other exhibitions.

In the 1955 Annual of the Whitney Museum there were some two hundred exhibitors of whom one-fourth were Jews. Yet there was not a single work of recognizable Jewish derivation in it—unless one can so classify a sculptured portrait of Franz Kafka by Sahl Swarz, and one of Dr. L. G. (Greenstein) by Helena Simkhovitch. In the "Contemporary," which imposed no theme but to which it may be presumed that the artists submitted such of their work as had some kind of Jewish association, "Talmudist" by Samuel Sigaloff, "Rabbi" by Rubi Roth, and "Man of Judah" by Zorach consorted with "Johnny Appleseed" by William Gropper, "The Clam Digger" by Joseph Hirsch, and "William Tell" by Ruth Vodicka. Sigmund Menkes contributed a richly painted "Torah," but Hyman Bloom did an equally sumptuous "Female Leg." There was Ben Wilson's "Sabbath," but Walkowitz's "Rest Day" derived, not from Genesis, but from Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Grande Jatte." Even a Jewish title—"Jeremiah," "Rachel," "Saul"—when it is not the name of a contemporary, may be no more than a convenient, or opportunistic, reference. A studio visitor likes a portrait of a dark soulful man. Job-like, he calls it. Why, that's a strange coincidence: it *is* called Job, this head of a resident of Fiesole or Gloucester. Only one-fifth of all the works in this exhibition were even nominally concerned with Jewish motifs.

Not surprisingly, most of the works of art that are really Jewish in content in (and outside) these exhibitions derive from life in the Old World. Generally, they have been done by artists who were born abroad but came here as children, and who were recalling or reconstructing early experience. Recollection could be grim, as in Walkowitz's expressive drawings of ghetto faces; reconstruction was more likely to be nostalgic. That nostalgia can yield products of a higher emotional, and aesthetic, level than the sentimentalizing pictures by an Abel Pann, of *der alter heym,* or of the Holy Land, was demonstrated in both shows by Samuel Rothbart's "My Earliest Memory," Nahum Tschacbasov's "Friday Evening," Belle Golinko's "Chanukah Prayer," and Hannah Moscon's "Ritual Dance." In no theme is controlled nostalgia more apparent than in the thoughtful and warmly felt portraits of rabbis by Weber, Samuel Adler, Ben-Zion and others—owed to the happy influence, perhaps, of Marc Chagall. Even a satirical artist like the Boston-born Jack Levine showed a vigorous, straightforward portrait of the late Professor Alexander Marx. (Marx was not a rabbi, but from his connection with the Jewish Theological Seminary, his piety, and his Jewish learning, he was as good as one to Levine. This artist, given to steam-rollering the faces of the profligate in his canvases, has invested with charm the miniature "portraits" of King David, King Solomon, and other Biblical figures he painted in memory of a good Jew, his father.)

Hyman Bloom's many portrayals of rabbis or other Jews with Torahs whom he recreated from memory are done in essentially the same manner as his other paintings, with a strongly defined composition and a dazzling, even razzle-dazzling, surface of brilliant broken color. The smashed-spectrum glitter of "Chandelier" becomes, in "Corpse of Elderly Male" and "Corpse of Elderly Female," a mass of iridescent putrescence. While the faces of his rabbis are also bedizened masks, they are less violent texturally and sometimes a face emerges as a face. In his most simple approach to this subject, in his drawings, Bloom's rendering is more in the spirit as well as the technique of Rembrandt. Here the artist reveals his probing for values deeper than those he has achieved in the morbidities, however brilliant, of a considerable part of his canvases.*

*The attention of the interested reader is directed to Hilton Kramer's article on Bloom and Jack Levine ("Bloom and Levine: The Hazards of Modern Painting") in our June 1955 issue.—ED.

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Why do these artists of diverse temperament and direction exercise such restraint, display so much sympathy, in the treatment of the rabbi? Clearly because he is not an individual, but a symbol of the Judaism which they no longer profess and can hardly understand, but to which they are paying their last respects.

OF JEWISH life in this country the artists have had even less to say. Those of the older generation had the memories of a much more vivid form of Jewish life to draw on if they had a mind to, but, like most other immigrants, they preferred to go American, to be an artist like other American artists. For the second generation, the land of nostalgia is New York's East Side. But, however exotic it appeared to a sympathetic outsider like Hutchins Hapgood, who wrote *The Spirit of the Ghetto,* or to a bewildered one like Henry James, who wrote some of his most elaborately opaque pages about it, the East Side was a Minsk or Shnipitshuk in process of constant dilution; and the nostalgia for it is diluted in the same measure. Those who were born there lived a largely American sort of life; they "lost" very little by moving away. Theirs is an incomplete, a half-hearted and half-humorous nostalgia for the more superficial Jewish aspects of the East Side, not for such of its roots as took in the new soil. And humor blunts the ache of nostalgia. Presumably what they yearn for on old Suffolk Street is obtainable in the more spacious Flatbush and West Bronx. The East Side itself is still there. If you want another look at the stands of herring and pickle barrels, if you would like to hear juicy Yiddish or see a Jewish compositor setting Jewish type, if you must plow your way through the narrow streets where pushcarts used to be (and which cars now traverse at a pushcart's pace), the subway will get you there in no time.

For this reason in part, memories of the East Side and of American Jewish life generally do not give many artists the feeling which the Old World ghettos did. Of the older generation, an Arnold Friedman painted "The Peddler"—once; and Jerome Myers, in drawing, etching, pastel, and oil, did endless scenes of children playing in the streets, of bearded elders (all "patriarchs"), and women marketing, along with processions in honor of saints. For the whole East Side was picturesque to Myers, who was born in Virginia and did not go out of his way to state that he was Jewish, who in fact evoked the same sort of charm from the Italians, Russians, and Chinese of the East Side as he did from his Jewish subjects. Characterization was not Myers's forte. That ability the young Jacob Epstein had. Born on Hester Street, he went back and rented a room there when his parents prospered and moved uptown. From his window he made drawings of the people and activities below; and he was a natural to illustrate the book on the East Side that Hapgood wrote. If his drawings of both personages and plain folk lacked the vigor and bite we associate with his later work as a sculptor, they abound in accurate observation, and their gentleness is in keeping with the text. "Wherever one looked there was something interesting," Epstein himself wrote in his autobiography, *Let There Be Sculpture,* "—a novel composition, wonderful effects of lighting at night, and picturesque and handsome people. Rembrandt would have delighted in the East Side, and I am surprised that nothing has come out of it. . . ."

The art which has come out of American Jewish life is altogether rather scanty. In the exhibitions held in connection with the Tercentenary there were such paintings as Philip Reisman's "The Garment District," William Meyrowitz's "The Rooster and the Book,"* and Raphael Soyer's "The Seamstress." There have been many others, but not nearly so many as one might expect, and especially in the field of portraiture. Long ago Soyer did a moving double portrait of his parents

*This (like Meyrowitz's "The Ram's Horn") could be Old World or New World in origin but, anyway, how many people got the point of the story part of the picture? For its title merely suggests the whimsical phrase from which it derives: *er kukt vie a hon in b'nai odom,* which cannot be translated and can be explained only tediously.

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that epitomized a whole generation of immigrants. But few artists emulated him: it is as if they were trying to forget the world their parents symbolized. Ben Shahn, in the apprentice work of his teens, used all the members of his family as subjects, but in maturity never painted a portrait of his wonderfully Jewish father, of whom he was very fond. (Only recently was he moved by nostalgia to do the clever drawings of Old World types for the program of one-acters called "The World of Sholom Aleichem." His broken, seemingly casual but expressive line is very different from what it was in the drawings he made long ago of old Jews in skullcaps and related subjects: he himself recalls them now as "slick, Ingres-like.")

The New World has offered too many provocative vistas, in city and country, for the artists to be willing to stay long in their own backyards, physically or spiritually. Walkowitz was as much haunted by the new skyscrapers as by the old ghetto faces, and couldn't stop drawing them as lyrical visions. Like many other artists here and abroad, Louis Lozowick felt a challenge in industrial structures, shaping them into abstract forms that expressed their nature more truly than their actual appearance. In recent years the city as city and the factory as factory are being taken for granted more, and the artists who are not completely subjective in their work find their themes in all the variety of the forty-eight states, and abroad. It is harder to distinguish the color and shape of American Jewish life as something apart, and the East Side, aesthetically, goes on shrinking in dimension.

WHETHER from a lack of continuous and unconscious Jewish sustenance, or from intellectual conviction, few of the artists reveal a more pervasive Jewishness that goes beyond mere subject matter. They may say with Weber: "I am proud to belong to a race that was civilized when the French were still barbarians." But they have largely left it up to Weber to demonstrate it in his art —which was thoroughly influenced by the art of the French. Weber has been able to translate his affirmation into paint many times. After his 1923 exhibition, Lloyd Goodrich wrote: "The something that has happened to him since his last appearance as an artist and that has made him Jewish has also made him doubly important. It is an immense thing to have a background and to speak for a race."

What had happened to Weber as an artist was that he had stopped painting in the then new post-Cubist abstract idiom because he had come to feel that it did not suit his temperament. To fill the void, the experiences of his early impressionable years rushed in, taking hold of him and his brush. But one can exaggerate the Jewish elements in Weber's work: he has done great things in still life and landscape, too. Born in Bialystok, living there till he was ten years old, Weber was exposed long enough to Jewish ceremonial and to Jewish types to have a store of memories. But his subsequent exposure to and ardent quest for Western culture had so overwhelming an effect that these memories not only became deeply buried, but faded. By the time Weber was twenty-four, with $2,000 saved for a sojourn in Paris, he was all wrapped up in the religion of painting. He studied with Matisse for a year; he was an intimate friend of Henri Rousseau; and the great experience of his life was the Cézanne memorial exhibition of 1907 (not a single painting of that master had yet been seen in America at that time). The result was that Weber had to have refresher contacts to bring his Jewishness to the surface. Thus, in writing of his "Talmudists" (1934), he declared that he "was prompted to paint this picture after a *pilgrimage* [italics mine] to one of the oldest synagogues of the East Side in New York."

Does one use the word "pilgrimage" when one attends a synagogue as a matter of course? And how old is the oldest synagogue on the East Side that it should be an object of veneration? It is a tourist who makes such pilgrimages; if he is deeply sympathetic like Weber, call him an observer. If he is not an outsider, he has at best only one foot in the door when he can write: "I find a living

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spiritual beauty emanates from, and hovers over and about, a group of Jewish patriarchal types when they congregate in search of wisdom in the teaching of the great Talmudists of the past. Their discussion of the Torah is at times impassioned, inspired, ecstatic, at other moments serene and contemplative. . . . to witness a group of such elders bent down and intent upon nothing but the eternal quest and interpretation of the ethical and spiritual significance and religious content of the great Jewish legacy—the Torah—is for me an experience never to be forgotten."

Possibly some of Weber's extreme distortions are dictated, not by considerations of design, but by his attempt to regain his Judaism by storm. Having lived away from Jewish customs, he invests them, when he turns to them in his art, with an excess of emotion. Not born in a Hasidic environment but having the temperament of a Hasid, he views the Talmudic wranglers in emotional terms more appropriate to Hasidim blessing the moon.

As I indicated before, Weber's fame does not rest exclusively on his achievement with Jewish themes. But there is one artist, Ben-Zion, who is fanatically Jewish in his work, and it is not the Old World or the New World but the world of the Bible which is his constant, almost only stimulus. Opinion differs on the merit of his work. I for one find a great deal of freshness and originality in both his paintings and etchings: they have the special vigor of a self-taught artist of talent. A certain rigidity of approach may also be the mark of the autodidact, or it may be a matter of temperament. Years ago Ben-Zion used to make ink drawings of harsh prophets on every sufficiently smooth stone that came to hand—reminiscent of prophets in the wilderness? He is also that *mizzi yahudi* (so named by Arab stonemasons) of which Jerusalem is literally built —the stone called the "stiff-necked Jew."

Strangely enough, neither Weber nor Ben-Zion has as yet participated in the decoration of the modern synagogues which have been built in recent years and which have been the strongest stimulus to the creation of a Jewish art this country has ever known. Possibly Weber's painting, so powerful even in his relatively small canvases, would not "stay" on the wall, but it is worth letting him try to make it do so. Ben-Zion, I know, detests specifications; he likes to decide for himself the size and shape of his pictures; but I think he can be persuaded to learn the facts of mural life. In a coming series of articles to appear in COMMENTARY, I shall discuss the work of Adolph Gottlieb, who is one of the most gifted of the abstract artists and who is most likely to do his greatest painting with symbols of his own creation: whether these will be felt as Jewish remains problematical. There, also, I will consider the work of A. Raymond Katz in many mediums. He, too, is an easel painter, and not only on Jewish themes. But there is a mural feeling about the best of these canvases, and especially those which are based on the free elaboration of Hebrew letters, such as his canvas shown in the "Contemporary" called "Patriarchs and Matriarchs." This is a field of design Katz has made peculiarly his own. It suggests that this artist could also completely realize himself in Jewish art. If the synagogues continue to multiply at the rate they have in postwar years (which remains to be seen), if they continue to favor modern design (which is likely), and if these synagogues make full use of advanced painters and sculptors for their decoration (which is still uncertain), some kind of specifically American Jewish art may emerge.

Outside the synagogue, I can only see the persisting, irreversible integration with American art at large. In an article on Israeli painting (COMMENTARY, June 1953), I pointed out that it still had no Jewish quality because it was not sufficiently rooted in its own soil. Most of the Israeli artists were immigrants; the oldest of them were in the country not much longer than a generation. This, as we have seen, is true of many of the leading American Jewish painters; and these did not come to an aesthetic wasteland: if American art did not have a

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firmly settled tradition, it did have a past; and it had a present Academy to work for or against. Like the American environment generally, American art absorbed the newcomers to strengthen itself, and in return gave them a stimulus and the courage to strike out in whatever direction their talents turned. If they had first been under the influence of a Jewish art tradition, it might have modified the pull of the American magnet, but there was no Jewish tradition. Jewish personal traits were not strong enough to form one.

Today there is another factor making the emergence of a Jewish quality still more unlikely in American painting and sculpture: the abstract idiom dominating contemporary art. In the past a characteristic national quality in art was not easily transplanted. Vine cuttings from Bordeaux set in California soil produce California, not French, wine; but look at a Glackens and you cannot help thinking of Renoir. In the advance-guard idiom of today, an American canvas painted under a French influence may not show it to the same degree. The works of Piet Mondrian's disciples in any country have as little Dutch feeling as his own:* the apotheosis of the right angle is a unitarian rationalism. In any kind of abstract art there is little possibility for the expression of even the strong national quality which marked the previous art of a France or Germany or Italy. How then should it have a specifically Jewish quality in countries where the Jews are largely immigrants, in America—or Israel?

Abstract art is not the final word in art. We can expect the return, sooner or later, to an art more visibly related to nature. So far as the "Jewish question" is concerned, however, that will only bring us back to where we started. All that we can say in the end is that American Jews have played as worthy a role in American art as they have in science, law, medicine, and merchandising; and the younger generation in art seems talented enough to sustain that high role.

*There are critics who would disagree with Mr. Schack and hold that Mondrian's art is very, very Dutch in its neat brightness.—Ed.

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AMERICA'S TWO ZIONIST TRADITIONS

Brandeis and Weizmann

JUDD L. TELLER

FEELING the strong pressure of Israel to fulfill their Zionist duty and provide immigrants to Israel in substantial numbers, American Zionists have again come down with a case of aliyah fever. Shlomo Zalman Shragai, former mayor of Jerusalem, and now chief of the Aliyah (Immigration) Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, arrived here last May and for a fortnight addressed meetings of Orthodox groups, Zionist and non-Zionist, exhorting them in Yiddish to send forth men and women to settle in the land. At the same time, 75,000 American Jews associated with the Labor Zionist movement, many of them perhaps tenuously, had begun receiving questionnaires asking whether they plan, and how soon and under what circumstances, to pull up stakes and settle in Israel. Caught between the forensic Labor Zionists, with their forty-year history of "summoning the masses," and the dogged, tense Shragai, other Zionist groups have likewise pledged themselves, not without reluctance perhaps, to join in stimulating "immigration from the West."

This is not the first case of aliyah fever since the establishment of Israel. Playing for time, American Zionist leaders had at first assured Ben Gurion that if he were only patient they would eventually deliver real halutzim to him, American youth as ready for sacrifice and pioneer living as any from East Europe. Subsequently the sights were lowered quite a bit and the talk was all about professionals and technicians who would go to Israel for a year of service, rather than settling there permanently. Most recently, still without renouncing the earlier goals, American Zionists have spoken of middle-class, middle-aged immigrants with modest means who might set themselves up comfortably with a capital of $15,000 to $25,000. There have even been apologetic suggestions to the effect that no harm would come to Israel if a considerable proportion of American immigrants consisted of retired couples whose Social Security allotments, supplemented by modest savings, would go further in Tel Aviv than in New York.

Behind the present nervousness and sense of urgency lie a combination of circumstances, not all of them unfavorable. Zionist and Israeli government circles have begun to speak, with some gratification, and even surprise, of a trend toward American aliyah, numerically negligible perhaps, yet constant and perceptible nevertheless. Some of these *olim* have not even been cleared through Zionist institutions, nor have they bothered to determine their status with the Israeli authorities; this is why it is so difficult to ascertain their numbers from official agencies. They may be described as "lingering tourists," people who linger on long enough to be regarded as residents. They include small-town shopkeepers or businessmen who had been bothered by fears of intermarriage as they watched their children grow into adolescence, and who, on visiting Israel, found they could do better by investing their small

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THAT Zionism has a tradition of its own in this country, with roots sunk deeper in the past than many a tradition that, on the face of it, appears more "native," will come as a surprise to most readers. JUDD L. TELLER, who is a steady contributor to these pages, last appeared in them with a major article in July 1954, "Yiddish Litterateurs and American Jews." Since then, however, we have published several book reviews by him. His most recent book is *Scapegoat of Revolution* (Scribner's), which came out last fall. Mr. Teller is widely known as an authority on the Zionist movement and Israel.

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capital in Israel than by moving to Los Angeles or New York, where the danger of mixed marriage is less than in a small American community. You find some who have tarried in Israel for the sheer "adventure in living"; and among the latter you find some Gentile Americans who became enamored of the country while serving there as technical advisers—Dr. Walter Clay Lowdermilk is the most celebrated example. This trend has reassured those American Zionists skeptical of the prospects for aliyah and apprehensive about the charge of dual allegiance.

But there are other reasons, too, for Zionist aliyah talk. The Zionist movement stands less than a year away from the next World Zionist Congress. America's Zionist leaders, especially the Laborites, who have over-committed themselves on aliyah, are wary of again facing the charge of having failed to produce aliyah. Their reaction may also, unconsciously, be related to David Ben Gurion's return to government.

BEN GURION is the chief exponent of an Israeli attitude that springs from an unqualified ignorance of the character of American Jewry. He has visited this country several times, once as prime minister, yet he has never permitted later impressions to supplant or modify those he carried back with him to Palestine after a brief sojourn in this country during World War I, when the American Jewish community was in a political and theological turmoil that was notably uncharacteristic of American Jewish life and has by now long subsided.

At that time Jewish communal life generally, and also American Zionism, was feeling the full impact of the new or relatively new immigrants whose problems, semantics, procedures, and tastes were conditioned by the same East European milieu as Ben Gurion's. The new immigrants, with their prodigious energies, total absorption in political causes, and energetic pursuit of status and prestige, had temporarily unsettled the community. "Downtown" was rebelling against "Uptown," the *"yahudim"* of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee were being compelled to give *"yidn"* representation in its counsels; the American Jewish Congress, elected by popular ballot, was challenging the august authority of the American Jewish Committee; East Side meeting halls, crowded to the rafters, shook with cheers, Bronx cheers, and even fisticuffs whenever Jewish ideologies were debated. Ben Gurion was a very young man at the time, one of a group of Palestinian and Russian Zionist visitors stranded here by the 1914 war. The group included that mature wit, Schmaryahu Levin, the future builder of the Palestine Electricity Station, Pinchas Rutenberg, and Isaac Ben Zvi, now President of Israel. They quickly became auxiliary leaders of the East Europeans' revolution against the domination of the German Jews. It was in the course of this struggle that B.G.'s personality as a leader began to emerge; now, when he recalls American Jewry, he is really revisiting the scene of his hopeful youth. Behind his castigations of American Zionists for their dwindling zeal, there is probably much personal resentment over the discrepancy between his memories and present reality.

The interlude of fervor and activity which, through an accident of history Ben Gurion witnessed forty years ago, lasted no more than a decade, and American Jewry, and Zionism with it, then reverted to an earlier tradition. The slogans of that decade remained, however, and are with us today, and the inconsistency between their words and traditions on the one hand and their present behavior on the other is what has made American Zionists the target of B.G.'s polemical blasts. Nor can abstruse discourses on whether America is *golah* (exile) or *tfutsah* (dispersion) resolve the basic misunderstanding. Indeed, these discourses were introduced by the late Hayim Greenberg, essentially a Russian Zionist, who resorted to them as an unconscious means of reconciling his own very real private conflict. The truth is that American Zionists were never committed to the East European Zionist *Shulchan Aruch,* and even the *mitzvot,* the ritual commandments that Zionists

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everywhere had in common, were performed differently in America than in Europe. Unless American Zionists learn how to assert or reassert the particularism of their own American kind of Zionism, the conflict with Israelis of Ben Gurion's cast of mind will continue.

Let us consider these separate traditions. On both continents, Zionism preceded Herzl. In Eastern Europe it was primarily a movement seeking to solve the very grave problems of the Jews under Czarist rule. It was the last of three stages in their struggle for emancipation. The first two stages occurred simultaneously. Victims of a policy which hemmed them in geographically, economically, and culturally, young Russian Jews joined revolutionary movements while their elders petitioned for relief from harsh interdicts. The policy of the Czars also had harmful effects within the Jewish community, since in the narrow confines of the Pale the disciplines and prescriptions of Orthodoxy exacerbated the frustrations of the younger generation of Jews. The intramural struggle between the pious and "enlightened" gave rise to indiscriminate and unjustifiably bitter self-criticism, which indicated that the Czarist regime was succeeding in its policy of humbling the Jew and lowering his self-esteem. Not that this self-criticism was not warranted in part by objective conditions, but it was also stimulated by a predisposition toward masochistic introspection which the Russian Jew may have acquired from his Slav environment.

When the Lovers of Zion and *Bilu* (the student group who emigrated to Palestine in 1882) proposed their program of agricultural resettlement on the ancestral soil of Palestine, they pointed the way out of a dilemma. Here was the opportunity for simultaneous release from both Czarist oppression and Orthodox Jewish constriction, and for a restoration of Jewish self-esteem—life in the city, according to the view of that time, was contrary to natural law, and the *shtetl* was held to embody the worst features of decadent city life. This movement was thus launched by a rationalist generation set on three objectives: religious reform, social reform, and political franchise. There was almost nothing Messianic about it; after several traumatic experiences, even the most pious and mystic among the "learners of the ghetto" had become wary of Messianism.

None of the circumstances that brought East European Zionism into being existed in America. The emancipation that Russian Jewry hoped to gain by unrelenting struggle was the immigrant's natural right almost from the moment of his disembarkation in this country. His religious discipline crumbled under the impact of American conditions; he was immediately given a full political franchise, though he kept on demanding it by conditioned reflex without yet knowing how to exercise it; and his impulses to social reform could well express themselves on the American scene within the trade union and the civil rights movements—and within the Jewish community by the struggle for recognition that followed the attainment of economic power by the "men with a trade," who had formed the lower strata of Jewish society in the Pale.

This ferment from East Europe was introduced into an American community that already happened to enjoy considerable prestige, not only for its demonstrated character and achievements, but also because of its past cultural history. American culture had strong Hebraic roots; Hebrew characters adorned the portals of its oldest universities. In the Civil War both North and South had solicited doctrinal endorsement from the rabbinate. English-speaking poets on both sides of the Atlantic wrote with deference of the ancient Hebrew Witness to Sacred Revelations. Lincoln, Whitman, and Thoreau, each in his own way, evoked the rhythms and accents of the Old Testament. This high regard for Judaism and the Jew in Anglo-American tradition also set the pattern for the American Jew's Zionism. European Zionism was concerned with the condition of the Jew, but was not enamored of his personality. The earliest American Zionism, in the days of Mordecai Emanuel

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Noah and Emma Lazarus, proudly proclaimed its pride of Jewish birth and invoked the respect for the Holy Land and the Chosen People that was traditional in Bible-reading America.

Louis Lipsky shows himself aware of this difference in Zionist traditions when in his fragmentary *Memoir* he writes of his great antagonist in American Zionism, Louis D. Brandeis: "His romantic impulse had been touched. He seemed prepared for the ideal adventure of a Chosen People, and he wanted the best Jewish talent to be summoned to build the New Zion." Lipsky also writes: "I recall reading Emma Lazarus' 'Banner of the Jew'; what a lyric voice! how it stirred racial memories. But the probably more Jewish modern Zionist poetry fails to arouse an equal enthusiasm." And again: "I recall the early reading of Eugene Sue's *Wandering Jew* as if it were yesterday. But recollection of the first impression of Herzl's *Jewish State* is a blur. The passionate eloquence of Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda* stirs me yet. It still gives me a refreshing thrill of quick recognition. But the masterly eloquence of Max Nordau at Zionist Congresses pales under the scrutiny of cool reason which quenches its fire."

It is obvious that each of the two Zionisms reflected the image that the larger community had of the Jew. European Zionism, like all Jewish emancipation movements on the Continent, tended to see some, if not all, aspects and classes of Jewry through the less than charitable eyes of Christian Europe. American Zionism, in its nascent pre-Herzlian stages when it spoke with a Sephardic or German voice, saw the Jew in the same romantic light with which he was suffused in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon community. Hence European Zionism made it its purpose to rehabilitate the Jew and make him as good as others, while American Zionism, like the early Christian Zionists in Britain and America, was essentially a delayed messianism stressing the incorruptible, essential, and enduring nobility of the Jew.

The time was auspicious for messianism. America, from just before the Civil War right down to 1918, had been retreating from the cool reason of the framers of the Constitution and experiencing a series of messianic convulsions that included Abolitionism, the Populist movements, the "phalanxes," and the various other utopian socialist settlements. It was a time of soaring dreams and bombast, of tragedy and high destiny. But, of course, this early American Zionism, however romantic its cast, arose in answer to very real Jewish needs overseas. Mordecai Emanuel Noah's Zionism was a response to the Damascus "ritual murder" libel and its consequences for the Jews of the Levant, and Emma Lazarus', to the Russian pogroms of 1881. America was then playing the big brother to Continental revolutions. How natural that American Jews should also feel an obligation to play the big brother to their persecuted fellow Jews; and then, too, there was their own tradition of *pidyon shevuyim*, the "ransoming of the captives," which was a centuries' old practice, especially among the Sephardic Jews, inveterate ocean travelers, merchant princes, and fugitives from Inquisitions.

There was still another, purely American, reason for the emergence of pre-Herzlian Zionism and for the subsequent endorsement of Herzl even by some members of that extremist wing of the Reform rabbinate which had substituted Sunday for the Jewish Sabbath—the "Social Gospel" and social reform movement in America. Christian ministers were descending into the slums and sweatshops and the Reform rabbi sought a similar ministry among the mass of Russian Jewish immigrants at the turn of the century. However, Bernard Felsenthal, the later Stephen S. Wise, and Judah L. Magnes could not expect these immigrant slum-dwellers to respond to their Protestantized or Unitarianized piety; the East European Jew was either Orthodox or anti-religious. Some other means of communication had to be found. Zionism provided this means of communication. Thus, from the very beginning a group of Reform rabbis

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who had little theology to offer became the spokesmen of the Jewish immigrant masses in three major areas of concern—nationalism or Zionism, the struggle against sweatshop exploitation, and the revolution against the dominance of the *yahudim,* the by then well-established German Jews.

AMERICAN Judaism was experiencing a grave crisis. The Reform rabbinate, composed of Jews of German origin, was preaching to scantily filled pews. When the East European Jews came on the American scene with their prodigious needs and energies, their ethnic culture, and their secular nationalism—of which Zionism was the most forceful expression—the Reform rabbis who were affiliated with Zionism suddenly found that their talk of Israel's Mission and the messianic millennium had taken on concrete relevance. Social reform and Zionism—the latter term is used here to embrace all those who help Israel politically and philanthropically—have remained to this day bricks and mortar of American Jewish community cohesion. It was this combined impulse that brought Louis D. Brandeis to Zionism. He began as an arbitrator in garment trade strikes and ended up as a controversial figure in world Zionism. American Zionism was, and still is, a fascinating admixture of *tsedakah* and a Messianic pragmatism, therefore something quite different from European Zionism.

THE difference between these two traditions in Zionism was sharply revealed for the first time at the convention of the Zionist Organization of America in Cleveland in 1921. Historians, depending on where their sympathies lie, have variously described the convention as one in which the disciples of Louis D. Brandeis deserted the Zionist movement, or as one which saw them purged by the followers of Chaim Weizmann. Veterans of that struggle who then opposed Brandeis find themselves today, by a twist of fate, explicitly or implicitly upholding his ideas against Ben Gurion's attacks. It is apparent that the issues over which Weizmann and Brandeis divided are almost exactly the same issues—due allowance being given to the changed circumstances of our time—in dispute today between the Israelis and American Zionists.

Louis Lipsky again: "The words of the Zionist [European] vocabulary had to be learned, and that was a jaw-breaking task. We had to learn the technique of an Austrian parliamentary system which had been adopted by the Zionist Organization . . . and then, more difficult, the full significance of Galut which, in Zionist idiom, became a terrible complicated monster."

As against this conception there was the definition of Galut given by Judge Julian V. Mack, a Brandeisist, to which the Weizmannists took violent exception. Yet it is a definition that the average American Zionist holds today. Mack described "the Jews scattered throughout the world" as "a living nationality in the sense of a people with a common inheritance, a common tradition, and for the large part a common religion." However, "The question of the recognition of the Jews in any country as a separate and distinct group was a question to be decided in each of these countries. . . . When in Paris we asked for national rights for the Jews in the new and enlarged states of Eastern Europe, we asked it for them when we asked it for every national group in each of these countries because, as we then asserted, equality of treatment to which the Jew is entitled meant equality as an individual with each other group or nationality within the country. But we asserted then, as we assert now, that in the United States of America and in the countries of Western Europe, there are no group-nationality political rights and we asserted and claimed none for the Jews in America, as no group in America asserted or claimed such rights for itself. We asserted then, as we assert now, that in Palestine the Jews, when the time came, would be the dominating element, would form a political nation in Palestine, but the thought of a political status of the Jews of the world was an impossible conception."

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Dr. Schmaryahu Levin, a member of the Chaim Weizmann-Albert Einstein delegation to American Jewry, replied to Mack. "We are for the time being a nation in exile," he told the convention, "a dispersed nation, and if we are to put a ban on Diaspora Nationalism, what kind of Nationalism, I ask, would remain to us? Here is a conception created by Zionist leaders which . . . might mean the complete negation of our hope, for it is directed against the very foundation of our national claim. That we are not in the Diaspora a political nationality is self-evident, and it is simply vicious to assert this fact as though there were Zionists who denied it. But to deny Diaspora Nationalism is to deny our existence as a nation. It is to say: there is no Jewish nation in exile; the Jewish nation is to come to birth in Palestine. Or, if one is to be logical, one should say: in Palestine will come to birth not the Jewish nation, but a Jewish nation, and a brand new one, for the old one is really no more. . . .

"Were the statesmen who have taken it upon themselves to return Palestine to the Jewish nation to adopt the point of view of the American Zionist leaders, they could claim the entire agreement was based on a misunderstanding. . . ."

Louis Lipsky, who was a leader in the Weizmann camp, writes retrospectively that what troubled Zionism even then was "the charge of 'double' patriotism, which at irregular intervals would rise up to plague and disturb us. It was a heavy boulder in our path." Mack's fear of the jargon of Schmaryahu Levin's Zionism possibly had in it some of the same distress and embarrassment which U.S. Zionists feel about the Israeli Zionist jargon. Nonetheless, Levin's statement that "we are not in the Diaspora a political nation" should have been reassuring on that score, just as Mack's definition of the Jews "as a living nationality" should, in turn, have left no doubt about his Zionist fealty.

But what Mack and Levin each said meant one thing in the context of the European experience and another in the context of the American one. Mack's definition was actually a repudiation of Zionism's determinist interpretation of the course of post-Emancipation Jewish history. What he announced was the heresy that is today at the root of Israel's controversy with American Zionism—that American Jewry is not subject to what Herzl and Nordau, the bourgeois liberals, no less than Ber Borochov, the theoretician of Marxist Zionism, viewed as the immutable and inexorable laws of Jewish destiny in the Diaspora, and from which there was no release except through the Ingathering of the Exiles. Levin, and the Weizmannists generally, were undoubtedly aware that American conditions precluded the re-creation here of European patterns, yet this very fact caused them to regard the prospects for the viability of American Jewry as even slimmer than those of European Jewry. To them, the term "living nationality" was probably as hollow as the Reform rabbinate's "mission of Israel" if it did not connote the vigorous and tumultuous activity of the European *kehillah*, the posting of Jewish slates in elections to the Duma and Sejm, and a struggle for recognition as a national minority along with other minority nations in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Nationalist fever was sweeping large areas of Europe. To Brandeis and Mack this was an alien emotion and experience: America was a nation of peoples; minorities survived by voluntary association, not because of their legal status, and Independence Day was more an occasion for family picnics than for martial parades.

It is interesting that the timing and context of the schisms were approximately the same in 1921 and in 1951. Chaim Weizmann castigated American Zionists just three years after their magnificent contribution to the diplomatic victory at San Remo. Ben Gurion accused them just three years after their magnificent contribution to the establishment of Israel. "I have and I formulate here a definite accusation, a definite charge . . . before the bar of history. American [Zionist] leadership did not understand the

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moment. They failed to grasp it . . . here began the degradation of our movement . . . [the American Zionist leaders] cut the Zionist program to fit [their] circumstances." These words of Weizmann's in Cleveland in 1921 might have been spoken by Ben Gurion in New York City in 1951. The Brandeisists accused Weizmann of allying behind their back with the non-Zionists. The whole American Zionist movement has been making similar charges against Ben Gurion and the Israelis generally. Weizmann explained that the relationship was "complicated" because "some non-Zionist American Jews whom I was intensely anxious to win over for practical work in Palestine [e.g., Louis Marshall and his friends] disliked the Brandeis group." The Israelis today offer similar explanations. The Brandeisists then, like the entire American Zionist movement today, demanded a greater voice in Palestinian affairs, and accused the Palestinian-Europeans (today's Israelis) of meddling in American Zionist affairs; in reply to which Weizmann then, like Ben Gurion today, accused the Americans of seeking to dictate to the Yishuv. The crowning indictment, then as today, was that American Zionism had been "reduced" to the level of "mere philanthropy," and, even in this sphere, was performing less effectively than non-Zionists.

American philanthropy, however, was not *kitzvah* or *halukah* (dole) in the East European sense of the word, and this is something that the Continental and Israeli Zionist have not yet fully realized. *Kitzvah*, in the *shtetl*, was controlled arbitrarily by affluent *gabaim* until the intramural revolution in the *kehillot* turned them out and substituted self-help for the charitable dole. In this country, after a brief and successful struggle to democratize the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, philanthropy became a community-wide function, an efficient and impersonal pooling of resources for multitudinous ends—education, civic defense, charity, and international political action. American Jewry, it might be said, anticipated the methods of the Marshall Plan by several decades in the system by which it gave aid to world Jewry. That philanthropy in America is not *charity* but *social action* is something very difficult for foreigners to understand.

Around the austere Brandeis had assembled some of the early veterans of American Zionism, old immigrants or American-born scions of distinguished *yahudi* families, and a host of fledglings who in the course of time were to acquire high status in their special fields. There was Felix Frankfurter, whose caustic tongue was not yet tempered by judicial dignity, Stephen S. Wise, already the friend of presidents, and the very young Abba Hillel Silver. Ben Cohen hovered in the wings, an incognito young princeling.

The rank and file of American Zionism, which went along with Weizmann in voting for the ouster of Brandeis, was largely composed of relatively recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, Yiddish-speaking and Hebrew-schooled. As a seasoning, but no more than a seasoning, there was a handful of American-born intellectuals who had themselves sprung from this milieu. Foremost among these was the immigrant Rochester *shochet's* son, Louis Lipsky, whose elongated skull and features could fit even then among the family portraits of Yankee traders, clergymen, and college presidents. Louis Lipsky's immediate, intuitive identification with the "masses," and Stephen S. Wise's later return to them, is not to be accounted for by romantic enchantment alone. Lipsky still recalls impassionately that the Brandeisists, in his view, sought to impose the authority of an American Zionist elite upon the Zionist rank and file in this country and upon world Zionism, and that there was implicit humiliation for European Zionism in their demands. Dr. Wise returned to the Zionist Organization apparently because he felt that democratic procedure required the minority, i.e., the Brandeisists, to continue active participation in the Z.O.A. despite their defeat at the convention. However, there were still deeper causes for the Brandeis-Weizmann split.

A deep cultural schism separated the two

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groupings, a projection into the Zionist movement of the "people's revolt" against the *yahudim* of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the American Jewish Committee. A strange and sad Zionist pattern repeated itself: the East European Zionists had once before acclaimed and then savagely renounced a messiah who had come to them from outside the Pale. Theodor Herzl's heart broke beyond mending because of the callous way in which he was repudiated on Uganda. Now came Brandeis's turn. Perhaps the East European immigrant Zionists were seeking to assuage their own guilty consciences in accusing Brandeis of lack of Zionist loyalty. They had come here with the slogans and dreams of a Zionism patterned in considerable part on the nationalist movements of their native lands. World War I was over; the slogans were being hammered into policy in Poland, the Baltics, and Russia, and the Zionist dream was becoming flesh in Palestine. By their very emigration to America they had excluded themselves from these great and hazardous experiences and the obligations following upon them. By their verbal identification with the events they had fled from, they could participate in them at least vicariously. Brandeis's counsel ran counter to their needs and their mood. He spoke out of alien attitudes and experiences.

This may explain why of all Zionist groups, Hadassah alone stayed with Brandeis for many years. Hadassah was composed almost entirely, from the very beginning, of native American Zionists reared in the tradition of philanthropy as social action.

What is paradoxical, however, is that all of American Zionism was to become converted eventually under Weizmann's global stewardship into a movement of philanthropic social action, very much like Hadassah, however much it clung to political shibboleths and even to its ideological contempt for philanthropy. Brandeis had been ousted, but his view prevailed.

The difference between Hadassah and the other groups lay primarily in Hadassah's Brandeisian accent on such projects as nursing schools and hospitals, while the rest of the movement concentrated on fund-raising for the more general Zionist causes. With the retirement of Brandeis, however, the whole future evolution of American Zionism changed. That sizable contingent of the native Jewish intellectual elite which had been attracted by his prestige retired with him, or trickled away in the years immediately after. Their kind, in any such numbers, was never again to return to American Zionism as an organized movement. Leadership passed on to the East European immigrant intellectuals, Yiddish journalists and orators, but these were soon to be forced into a corner by the combined circumstance of the declining use of Yiddish and the emergence of the "managerial" Zionist.

With Weizmann continuing to advocate practical effort as the wisest and most expedient diplomacy, the fund-raiser became dominant. The fervent contributor to the little JNF blue-and-white box—which was the fund-raising instrument of the Stone Age of Zionism—was replaced by the affluent big contributor, and the giver and the fund-raiser were to dislodge both the intellectual and the humble *"klal tooer"* with a heart but no means. This was a universal evolution affecting all American Jewry and occurred simultaneously among Zionists and non-Zionists and in all areas of Jewish life.

The rise of the promoter and fund-raiser spelled the decline of American Zionism as an intellectual movement and the suspension of all Zionist ideological debate.

Debate was not to be resumed again until the 1940's, and even then it was not ideological. The bitter differences between the official Zionist movement and the Irgun were largely over methods. It was a difficult and wondrous period for American Jewry, which vacillated between despondence and exaltation as it shared vicariously the humiliation and destruction of Jews under Hitler and the heroic feats of the Palestinian underground. The professional "community organizers" took hold of the American Jewish community more firmly, as they expanded

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fund-raising operations, set up hierarchal strata of givers, and devised new solicitation techniques. The distinction between Zionists and non-Zionists largely disappeared. When Prime Minister Ben Gurion rode down Broadway under a shower of ticker tape in 1951, the hundreds of thousands that cheered him included Zionists and non-Zionists alike. Ben Gurion may well have mistaken this enthusiasm for the kind of ideological fervor that had characterized the East Side of World War I days. In any case, he suddenly became more insistent in his demands that American Zionists come and help build "land and nation." Out of practice in ideological discussion, the leaders of American Zionism could only apologize for not coming, and plead for dispensation. But the challenge continues to come from Israel: how does Zionism differ from non-Zionism if you do not come and settle with us?

YET the answer may well be simple. It lies in the pre-1921 American Zionist tradition. Messianism in the guise of social action, not national fervor, had been the very foundation of early American Zionism. Except for calls issued by the American Poale Zion, there was no special outcry from any quarter for *olim* from America in the years of World War I and immediately thereafter; and in the 1930's, when the British were so parsimonious with allotments of halutz immigration certificates, Americans were indeed discouraged from sharing in the pool, for which there was a long queue in Poland. But in the era of the Balfour Declaration, some very distinguished *olim* had come from America, of a caliber unmatched since, natives of *yahudi* stock—the idealistic Judah L. Magnes, the tender Jessie Sampter whose remains are interred in the large collective settlement Givat Brenner where she had made her home, and the nurses inspired by the revered Henrietta Szold, who, like East Europe's Labor Zionist ideologist, the saintly A. D. Gordon, settled in Palestine when past middle age. They came because of an inexorable passion to serve, to fashion for themselves a useful destiny, on the pattern of the Quakers, the Social Gospelists, the Social Reformers.

There were many factors operating against such Zionist immigration from America after the establishment of the State of Israel. There was the essential non-intellectualism of the movement in America for the past several decades, and social idealism is primarily a quality of intellectuals. There was the inhibition in American youth of the political and social impulse all through the Communist-McCarthy interlude; there is the fact that Israel, like all new postwar states, although in lesser degree, suffers moral vagaries which dishearten those who might have sought to fill a social mission there. There has also been perhaps the offensiveness of Ben Gurion's nationalist appeals, which belong by right to another era and another climate.

However, when the need for service reasserts itself in American Jewish youth, the Zionist movement will once again have the opportunity to channel the energy generated by the impulse toward social action into service in Israel. The Zionist movement is ideologically committed to regard Israel as the axis, spiritually and culturally, of Jewish survival, and other Jewish communities as ancillary or auxiliary in this respect. There is no other movement or grouping in Jewish life, however well disposed to Israel, that is similarly committed. And there is still another distinction.

All American Jewish organizations fall roughly into the three categories of defense, philanthropy, and religion. The first two are primarily concerned with social action in some form. There is evidence of apprehension among all three categories of Jewish organizational life that defense and philanthropy alone, and the liberal commitments that are regarded as consistent with Prophetic tradition, cannot go on indefinitely being the substance of a gratifying community existence. However, none seem to have realized as poignantly as does the rabbinate—perhaps because large sections of the latter have long erred in the other direction—that social action

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in the secular liberal sense cannot substitute for the religious-cultural experience. Hence the rabbinate, or sections of it, are desperately trying to induce—if not the reality at least the appearance of—this experience in themselves and in their parishioners, as is demonstrated by their almost unprecedented concern with the home activities and leisure-hour concerns of the American Jew. This, as it happens, is an area in which the Zionist movement might hope to accomplish much by virtue of its very catholicity, and because it is to this kind of activity, no less than to the establishment of Jewish political sovereignty, that Zionist ideology is committed. Not defense, the observance of ritual, or *tsedakah* alone, but these and many other ingredients go into making the hypothetical complete Jew.

But before it can perform usefully in this area, the Zionist movement must recapture the wholeness of its ideology; namely, the messianism of the American Zionist tradition and the concern with Jewish higher studies, elementary education, and Hebrew culture that once characterized all Zionism, both American and European. It will have to become again, as it was in the days of Herzl, Nordau, Gottheil, and Felsenthal, a movement that can win the interest and commitment of the Jewish intellectual elite.

American conditions, precisely because they offer him full participation in the larger community, can at best produce only a fragmentary Jew. The various survivalist doctrines tend to fragmentize the Jew further, into a Yiddishist, Hebraist, or Reconstructionist. The Zionist movement, with its experience in accommodating a diversity of ideological breeds, from Hashomer Hatzair to the General Zionists, could render a signal service to American Jewry by admitting under its roof the many survivalist doctrines; by offering the American Jew a variety of satisfactions, Zionism could claim a larger proportion of his time and preoccupations for "Jewish living." This would mean, of course, a constant and arduous effort to disentangle more of him from the claims and distractions of the larger community and to confine him within "introverted" or Jewish-centered activities. Such a contest between the Jewish and general community, however, would be no life-and-death struggle for the "soul" of the American Jew, but something falling within a traditional pattern—the kind of contest that pits family against community or individual against family, and leads not to the utter triumph of the one and defeat of the other, but to a better balance between the two.

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THE RABBI OF MINSK

Lonely Survivor of a Great Jewish Past

ANDREW MEISELS

THE Rabbi of Minsk is a small, stout man with a round, almost jolly face. His gray beard flows over onto the blue robe he wears, and a square, four-cornered skullcap rests on the shaggy gray hair of his head. He smiles often, in a sad sort of way, displaying even rows of silver teeth. He must be in his sixties, I am sure, although his appearance gives little clue to his exact age.

He was studying when I entered the tiny synagogue last September, sitting at a small, wooden table with two other elderly men and quietly chanting the ancient verses with periodic, rhythmical nods of his head.

As we entered, I took a small skullcap from my pocket and placed it on my head. The "Intourist" guide, whose worn hat never seemed to come off, looked at me in a puzzled sort of way, as if he had never really seen me before. The Rabbi noticed us, interrupted his study, and rose to greet us. The guide spoke a few words to him in Russian, explaining, I suppose, that I was an American student who was interested in Jewish life in the Soviet Union.

The Rabbi looked toward me, noticed my skullcap, and smiled, nodding, *"Shalom."* He came over and extended his hand. *"Shalom,"* I answered. The guide, who had been so cooperative in other matters, had seemed reluctant to bring me to the synagogue. Finding himself now in these strange surroundings, he looked trapped, almost frightened, and told me he would wait outside.

The Rabbi and I sat down on one of the long wooden benches in the synagogue. After a few unsuccessful attempts with other languages, we began speaking in Hebrew. It was the only language we both knew, although both of us spoke it only in a broken sort of way. "Is this the only synagogue in Minsk?" I asked, glancing about at the dark, ill-furnished room. It was pitifully small and couldn't possibly accommodate more than seventy-five people.

"This is all," he said. "Before the war there were ninety synagogues in Minsk. But now this is all."

I looked about me, at the poverty which the place betrayed, and my eyes were drawn to the two men still sitting at the wooden table, still studying, seemingly unconscious of my presence. "But if there were ninety before the war, how is it that this is the only one left?"

"There is no need for another synagogue," the Rabbi said sadly. "Unfortunately there is no need. Sometimes, during the High Holy Days, we could use another synagogue. You should see the people," he added, motioning with his hand. "They stand outside, all around. But—the next Saturday they are gone, and there is no need."

"Is it because of the Germans?"

"The Germans," he nodded. "Before the war there were 90,000 Jews in Minsk. Now there are only 7,000." The Rabbi walked across the room. "But there are other things." He looked out through the small, cracked window and smiled his sad little smile. Out-

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THIS portrait of the last rabbi and the last synagogue of the once great Russian Jewish center of Minsk was written by one of the group of editors of American college magazines that toured the USSR as guests of the government in September and October of 1954. ANDREW MEISELS represented City College of New York's semi-weekly, *Observation Post*, of which he was editor-in-chief. Mr. Meisels, who graduated in February 1955, was born in Budapest in 1933 and came to this country in 1939. He lives in New York City at present and works as a free-lance writer.

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side, forming a ring around the synagogue, there stood a few half-destroyed, half-eaten-away dwellings. Jews lived in those shacks, those who wanted to be near a house of worship and study. It was a scene of bitter poverty, of a dying era. "This little place," the Rabbi said, "this is enough."

He sat down again, and I asked him about the city's Jewish theater and Jewish newspaper. Both had recently been shut down in a move, ostensibly, against "cosmopolitanism." The Rabbi was silent for a moment, then looked up at me and shook his head. "The government felt there was no need for these things any more." And after a pause: "There really is no need for them."

HE ASKED me then about America and whether people still attended the synagogues here. He seemed surprised that I, a young man, should be at all interested in religion, and I asked him if many young people came to his synagogue.

"No," he said. "How can they come? They have school on Saturdays, and they couldn't come even if they wanted to."

"I suppose many of the young people from Minsk have gone to Israel," I suggested.

"Yes, some went. Not so many now, but right after the war some went. And yet," he sighed, "there are still many here, and they do not come."

"Is it true that the government does not permit the building of religious schools for children?"

"It is true."

"But," I looked at him, "do you think that's right?"

"Right?" The Rabbi shrugged his shoulders. "It is hard to say what is right." He turned to face me. "If young people were interested in studying Torah, we could teach them in our homes. That is permitted. But" —he took a deep breath and turned away— "there is really no need for a school. Unfortunately there is no need."

We talked about other things for a while, and the Rabbi asked me if I had been to the synagogue in Moscow. I told him that I had been there, and that I had been surprised to learn that it is the only synagogue in the Soviet capital, a city of 8,000,000 people. "Yes," the Rabbi smiled, "but it is a beautiful synagogue. And did you meet the Rabbi in Moscow?"

I told him that I had shaken hands with the Rabbi but that I hadn't had a chance to speak to him. "I was there on Saturday," I explained, "and the synagogue was very crowded."

"Of course," the Rabbi nodded. "The Rabbi of Moscow and me, we are old friends. We were friends even in the old days. I remember. . . ." He started to say something but interrupted himself. "You should have spoken to him," he said. "He is a very learned man, much more learned than I."

We sat there silently for a few moments. He got up finally and, not without a touch of pride, began showing me what little there was to see in his synagogue: the menorah with the cheap gold paint chipping from it, the few ancient scrolls of the Torah, obviously handled with loving care, the large collection of venerable old books with yellowing, crumbled pages.

I photographed as much of the gloomy interior as I could and asked the Rabbi if he would pose for a picture. "Why do you want my picture?" he asked. "I am an old man, and there is no need to take a picture of me." With a sweep of his hand he took in all of the dingy surroundings. "God is in this synagogue, small as it is," he said. "You cannot take a picture of him, so why take mine?" I pressed the matter no further.

THE Rabbi walked outside with me, and a small knot of curious bystanders gathered about us. In the midst of the group stood a little boy, no more than five years old and too young for school. The Rabbi patted the boy's close-shaven head and muttered a few words in Russian. He reached into the pocket of his robe and produced a small piece of candy. The child took it, glanced furtively at me and ran off.

The Rabbi pointed to a large, dilapidated structure next to the synagogue. "That was

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our old synagogue," he said sadly. "We had that one before the war. It is eight hundred years old. Eight hundred," he held up eight fingers. "And the Germans kept horses there."

He just stood in front of the building for a while, his hands behind his back, regarding the huge wreck. Then he turned to me again. "The government offered to give it back to us, but where would we get the money to repair it?"

The Intourist guide, standing off at a distance, noticed that we had stepped outside. Pointing at his watch, he motioned for me to leave, and I shook hands with the Rabbi. "*Shalom!*" he shouted after me as I walked off. "Come again." I looked back a few moments later, and he still stood there.

YOM KIPPUR

HOWARD HARRISON

NIGHT and day, and somberly I dress
In dark attire and consciously confess
According to the printed words, for sins
Suddenly remembered, all the ins
And outs, tricks, deals, and necessary lies
Regretted now, but then quite right and wise.

The benches in the *shul* are new. So this
Is what my ticket bought last year; I miss
My easy chair, this wood is hard, and I
Have changed my mind, refuse to stand and lie
About repentance. No regrets at all.
Why chain myself to a dead branch, I fall
In estimation of my neighbors who
Would have me be a liberated Jew
Ridiculing medieval ways
Keep up with them in each swift modern craze
To dedicate our souls to modern taste
To concentrate our minds on endless waste.

"Medieval" must be too new a term
For deeper, longer, truer, something firm
Within me used the word "waste." Despite years
Assimilating lack of faith, the fears
My fathers felt of God, their will to know
That vanity and greed were far below
The final aim of life will help me, too,
Atone, and be a Jew, and be a Jew.

HOWARD HARRISON'S poem "Encore" appeared in our issue of last February. Mr. Harrison was born in New York City and educated at City College, where he took both his bachelor's and master's degrees.

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FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

GARMENT CENTER SUCCESS

Portrait — with a Difference

DAVID BOROFF

ALEX MARCUS is a short, thick-shouldered man in his late forties with an air of jauntiness suggested by his springy step and his sharp garment-center suits. When he walks around the "market," he stops and speaks to many people with a relaxed, undemanding friendliness. In the industry he is regarded as something of a "Danish and coffee philosopher," and many men prominent in the dress business have confided in him. In an industry dominated by high-pressure types committed to the idea that if you don't get bigger you go downhill, Alex stands out as cannily conservative. A partner in one of the biggest firms manufacturing half-size dresses, he daydreams about a simpler life: "I'll go into a menial business . . . no push . . . peaceful-like. I'll get a salesman, a basic sort of kid who won't mind doing the shipping, and a pattern-maker—and I'm all set. What do I need all this *tumul* for?"

With his glasses, mustache, and alert look, people have often mistaken him for a physician. And in fact that was originally his ambition. Like so many sons of Jewish workers, Alex was earmarked for medicine at an early age, but there was no ready answer as to how to finance his education. The third of eight children, Alex can hardly remember a time when he wasn't working. As a boy of twelve during the 20's, he worked for a pharmacist with a thriving sideline as bootlegger. Alex and his next younger brother used to deliver the bootleg whiskey. When most kids their age were just learning to play punchball, Alex and his brother had more than $800 in the bank. This money ultimately went towards the purchase of a two-family house for the large family.

There was play, too, but, in retrospect, it was of a peculiarly entrepreneurial character. The kids on his block in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn rarely engaged in sports. Instead they carved a small empire of doubtful worth out of the sprawling lots which stretched out for two city blocks. Here the rites of their gang took form, and here in true buccaneering fashion there were unceasing fist-fights to determine the leader. Alex, a small but wiry youngster, won out and immediately designated his younger brother Izzy—now Irving—his lieutenant. The kids were endlessly involved in junk-collecting, in selling ice cream, and in other money-making ventures.

For two years, while attending high school, he worked as a garage attendant, pumping gas—in those days attendants literally pumped gas from hand carts—and fixing flats. He would do his homework in between customers. He came away from the job with more money in the bank and a double hernia. After graduation from high school, he went on a hitch-hiking trip to Canada with a friend. A photograph from that year, 1925, shows two slight young men

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DAVID BOROFF's vignette of a dress manufacturer indicates that the New York garment district is not quite that pure concentration of grandiose ambition which it is popularly supposed to be. Mr. Boroff was born in Brooklyn in 1917, was graduated from Brooklyn College, and now teaches English at that institution. He has published articles in the New York *Times*, *Congress Weekly*, and *American Speech*.

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in breeches and long socks with knapsacks on their backs. Alex's mouth is flattened into a thin line—a pose he often affected on the assumption that it made him look manly. He has often meant to do more traveling. In the last few years he has driven to Canada with his family and has been in Miami, but he has never really "seen the country"; he talks about taking a trip for a few months after he liquidates his business—if he ever does.

AFTER two years in the shipping department of a large linen house, Alex began to work as assistant to his older brother Lou, a piece-goods buyer in a dress house. He has been in the industry since that time. In the meantime he was attending City College in the evening and during the summer, an arrangement which lasted for five and a half years.

"In those days," he reminisced recently, "you worked plenty hard. One fellow did what two or three do today. At six o'clock the boss would send down for a sandwich, and you'd never get out night after night till eight or nine. The same with the cutters, but today it's different with the unions and everything. . . ."

As a piece-goods buyer, first assisting his brother, then as a full-fledged buyer in another firm, he never had big ambitions. "I wasn't like some guys in the line, always thinking about going into business. I just wanted to make a livin'. Anyway, I was going to City College at night, and in back of my mind was the idea that I would eventually study medicine or maybe dentistry." Life was pleasant enough during those early working years. A spirited, forthright young man, Alex was attractive to girls. With even-handed impartiality, he carried on aggressive flirtations with the friends of both his younger and older sisters.

Somewhat of a theoretician about most matters, Alex had decided in advance what he wanted in the girl he married. She was to have perfect vision—Alex wore glasses from childhood on—and she was to be an all-around athlete. (He was particularly fond of ice-skating and swimming, and he liked to take long walks.) At twenty he began to go with a girl still in high school, a pretty honor student who was planning to go to business school after graduation. However, she played hob with his carefully worked out criteria: she was near-sighted, and she had a profound disinclination for all sports. Moreover, Alex's mother, an imperiously charming woman, tended to be hypercritical about the girl friends of all of her sons. (Her criticism usually focused on some part of the anatomy, which was either too lavish or too skimpy.) He was married at the age of twenty-five.

Just before his wedding, he had an anxiety attack which was to recur a few times in his life. He had just changed jobs, and his new job was on a much larger scale than the previous one. Distressed by his new responsibilities and confronted by the *terra incognita* of marriage, he was unable to sleep or eat. He gave up the job for one of more modest dimensions and eased into the realities of marriage, and the crisis was over.

The pattern of his married life took shape. He visited his family a good deal, often by bicycle on Sunday morning. Alex was fond of visiting his local library and taking out biographies and books dealing with medicine. The young couple had a baby girl on whom they lavished all the "advantages." Because his in-laws were in poor health, Alex lived in their building, a clean if shabby four-family house with bird-cage rooms in Borough Park. On the block he was a huge favorite of the children, with whom he was open-handed and playful.

The war came and Alex, like many other piece-goods buyers with good contacts, went into business. It was a partnership with a smooth, cynical salesman, equipped with a strong, if cold, intelligence. Like most businesses during the war years, it went well, far better than Alex had dreamed. His older brother, Lou, who had inducted him into the industry, also went into business and did well. It was a source of deep regret to Alex that their father died shortly after they went into business, and did not live to see the businesses flourish. The father was a scrappy little baker with considerable pride of craft who, nevertheless, was anxious for his children to go into business or one of the professions.

ALEX's way of life did not change materially. He continued to live in the same small apartment, and his family spent the summer in the Rockaways. There were, of course, little extras: his daughter took

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singing lessons; she learned to sing "pop" songs at the age of eight with all the appropriate Broadway gestures. He entertained a little more lavishly. When cars became available after the war, he paid the usual extravagant sum for a new one. (But it was a Plymouth; he was uninterested in anything larger or more pretentious.)

The business continued good after the war, but in 1948 Alex began to feel a mounting uneasiness. He was at a loss to explain it himself. All he knew was that he felt much as he did at the time he was married and had started on a new and threatening job. He couldn't sleep or eat and found himself unable to endure his partner's megaloid talk about expanding or his cold-blooded appraisals of people. He felt vaguely that his partner, who lived high, was too "Broadway" for him. He began to yearn for what was to him a period of Arcadian simplicity—when he was on a job. Finally, he asked his partner to buy him out. Alex's defection was the talk of Seventh Avenue. People thought that he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. After being bought out, Alex picked up a well-paying job as piece-goods man in a large house making half-size dresses.

A few months later the dress business went into one of its recurrent tailspins, and people in the industry began to talk of Alex as a prophet. He himself was puzzled by his own uncanny timing, but did nothing to discourage his glossy reputation as a business seer.

He remained with the house making half-size garments for three years, during which time he learned this new offshoot of the dress line. In the meantime he made overtures to a brash, imaginative young salesman about going into business. (The salesman proved to be a younger counterpart of his former partner—if anything, more determined and thicker-skinned. Apparently, Alex feels safe teamed to such partners, though he dislikes them personally.) This business went even better than Alex's first venture. His partner, particularly gifted in styling and full of bold production ideas, worked out a low-priced line offering far more than any other manufacturer in the same price bracket. Moreover, he pushed through ambitious promotional schemes involving national advertising whose cost was shared by retail chains. Some of Sid Levine's commitments could hardly be fulfilled, and it remained for Alex to work them out: to provide special trimming or a certain fabric and yet keep the cost down to a point at which there was still a profit.

Then the business was set up as a "volume" house. Again Alex had scored; now his reputation as an astute forecaster was confirmed. He had called all the shots: he had "waltzed" from a business just before the dress market caved in; he had learned a new line and was now doing fabulously well in that line to the acute discomfort of his competitors.

WHAT his competitors did not know is that Alex was as unhappy about his business as they were. True, it was making money—a good deal of money. (At one point the line was so hot buyers were sitting on camp chairs in the lobby waiting their turn to see the dresses and place orders.) But it was a big business, and a "big business means big problems." There were headaches with personnel. As Alex put it, "they were all in each other's way" in a loft intended for a small house. Renting another loft only complicated matters, for Alex was constantly rushing from one loft to the other. In desperation, the partners hired an efficiency expert about whose value Alex was skeptical. He later acknowledged that the man in his six months in the plant had rung up some achievements.

There were ads in national magazines, and there was even a radio program for a while. Alex remarks, with some self-deprecation, that he helped launch the career of one of the country's most celebrated "pop" singers.

Most disturbing to Alex were his partner's plans. Determined to be the biggest in the business, Levine pushed bigger and bigger promotional schemes. The inevitable occurred: no matter how many corners they cut, they couldn't deliver as per specifications. In addition, they had such a magic reputation that orders flooded in beyond their capacity to fill. They were late on deliveries, and often when they were not, customers were dissatisfied with what they got. Returns became a persistent problem. Alex's feelings became increasingly negative about the "madhouse." After further internal conflict, he resolved to get out of the

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business and go into a much smaller business with his pattern-maker—"one you can control." As matters stood, a liquidation would have been disastrous because there would have been a huge loss in accounts receivable. The alternative was for Alex to be bought out by Levine, but here Levine proved to be very cagey. Knowing he had Alex over a barrel, he offered a very small sum. Alex countered by pressing for liquidation. Finally terms were agreed upon for Alex to be bought out. Papers were drawn up. Alex, still not accustomed to the financial level on which he was operating, was staggered by the lawyers' fees which added up to $4,000. At this point, there was a new rush of orders, and Levine entreated Alex to stay in business. The arrangements were scuttled and Alex "started to bounce again."

However, he feels confident now. He is "sitting on a pile of loot" and feels that he cannot get hurt. He takes a melancholy pleasure in contemplating the many people he knows who have "busted" in the industry. There is his former boss, who lost his money and is now a salesman. "I don't have ideas of grandeur," he recently told Alex. "I make a living; that's enough. And believe me, I'm better off." There is the contractor who went into the manufacturing business, went quickly through his money, and died of a heart attack. "In this business," Alex sums it up, "a guy who's nothing becomes a big enterprise, while a guy who's tremendous becomes a nothing. You can drop a bundle in no time at all."

Alex believes that he can beat the common fatality, and psychology, of boom and bust. The image he has of himself is that of a philosophic individual who can resist the pressures that come with success.

IN TRUTH, Alex's picture of himself is not too wide of the mark. His way of life has not changed radically. He drives a Dodge instead of a Plymouth and stoutly refuses to get a Cadillac. ("What, I couldn't line up four Fleetwoods outside the door if I wanted them? But what do I need it for?") His social life is confined to his brothers and sisters, to whom he is devoted, his in-laws, and a few friends with whom he plays cards. Without feeling any deep commitment to the idea, he wanted his wife to have a mink coat ("just so that she won't feel different from the other women"), but she has refused, saying, "Where do we go that I need a mink? To the pictures?" He drinks in moderation but has avoided the fashionable drinking and gambling he encounters in the top echelon of the industry.

A graduate of a rigorous Talmud Torah, Alex never had to think through his attitude towards religious education because his one child is a daughter and "a girl doesn't have to go; there's no Bar Mitzvah." For years he attended High Holy Day services in the small cellar synagogue, with spittoons at regular intervals, maintained by his old Talmud Torah. Two years ago, upon moving to a "nicer part" of Borough Park, he joined a Conservative temple with all its appurtenances of Men's Club, fund-raising Journal Drive, etc. He balked at participating in temple activities but contributed so generously—from his business—to the bazaar that he was elected to the board of trustees, despite his protestations. He has since been drawn into some activities, but he cannot abide the perennial niggling disputes and the maneuvering for power.

Alex's wife, Miriam, comes from a traditional home and keeps kosher. A moderate in most matters and a person of remorseless common sense, she is distressed by the incursion into her part of Brooklyn of religious zealots—the men in caftans and beards; the little boys, pallid and fearful with their bobbing *peyes*. "It's not right," she says. "Religion is fine, but this is too much already. After all, we're Americans. It's not right for them to bring their old-fashioned ways into the neighborhood."

In the market, Alex feels closest to the Yiddish-speaking men, the old-timers whom he identifies with his father, now dead. They, in turn, are fond of him and consider him a type becoming increasingly rare in the industry. Alex himself has observed a marked change in the personnel of the industry. There is now a whole new generation, many of whom are college graduates. "But they have to adapt themselves too," he says. "They have to get tough inside or they don't last."

The role he enjoys most is a paternal, benevolent one. Distrustful of organized charity because of the ritualized ostentation he sees in it, Alex takes pleasure in helping people out and talks with some expansive-

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ness about it. He has gotten many men in the industry jobs which worked out well. He can easily be approached for loans. He is especially considerate of his employees when they are getting married, becoming fathers, etc. In addition, he has achieved a small reputation as a match-maker. The older men in the industry have approached him for help in marrying off their daughters. They invariably ask if he knows someone like himself—"a down-to-earth fellow." Alex takes particular pride in one couple he brought together. The fellow, a shipping clerk who "couldn't get out of his own way," now runs his own successful business as the result of his father-in-law's assistance. Alex is always pleased when he can help his employees by "slipping them a few bucks." However, he insists that they be "basic people." He is unable to feel sympathetic towards his shipping clerk because the latter preens himself on his college education and his wife is devoted to such things as modern dance lessons.

"In this business," Alex says with the air of one who is amazed at his own audacity, "it's constant intrigue and manipulation." In his current venture, his business was thrown out of a national magazine because of failure to live up to specifications called for in the ads. Dependent upon national advertising, Alex's firm immediately organized a subsidiary business which would be able to place ads, the old business serving as the source of dresses for the new. But there was a "leak," and the national magazine again dropped their account. "Don't worry," Alex says, "we'll figure something else out. But you want to know something? I'm tired of all this melodrama. I'm fed up with the *dreykopf*. I would like to get out of the business. But it's hard: when you're making money, you just don't get out, even though you know you're riding for a fall."

He calls the turmoil and tumult of money-making a "rat race," which he regards with sad amusement and resignation. He likes to tell of a piece-goods buyer friend who decided to throw over a $15,000-a-year job because it was getting him "punchy." He determined to move to the West Coast and open a "nice, quiet liquor store." He moved there with his family, and while the store was being built, he received a long-distance call from his former boss entreating him to return with a $5,000 raise. The piece-goods man could not withstand these blandishments and returned to New York; now "he's bouncing again."

One of Alex's biggest customers is the multi-millionaire owner of a big mail-order business in Connecticut. This man, a self-made immigrant, has a large, gusty personality and is alternately berating Alex or "romancing" him. He often calls and complains about Alex's failure to deliver on time. On other occasions he urges Alex to visit him at his estate, offering to fly him from New York in his private plane. "I want to see your beautiful wife and your beautiful daughter," he says cajolingly. Alex has never accepted the invitation. "Who needs him?" he says.

When this mail-order tycoon proudly told Alex that he had lectured at a famous business college (he neglected to mention that he had also contributed to it heavily), Alex felt obliged to keep matters in balance. He informed his friend that he had majored in Latin. Now the mail-order man is fond of saying, "I like to speak with you, Mr. Marcus. You are a man of culture—with a specialization in Latin."

Alex is generally pleased with his life. His wife is surprisingly young-looking and attractive, without the sleek, synthetic quality he finds repellent in middle-class women of his acquaintance. His daughter, Marilyn, now a nineteen-year-old, is a junior at Brooklyn College. Possessed of her father's sense of humor and her mother's sturdy common sense, Marilyn "has always been a pleasure around the house." When it was time for her to go to college, there was no question about her not going out of town. "We want her with us"—and Marilyn agreed. For a time, Mrs. Marcus was considering transferring her to a "paying college" in the New York area because "there would be a better element there." However, Marilyn was happy at Brooklyn College and had joined a House Plan. Now she is engaged to be married.

Despite his situation, Alex has not developed any philosophy of success. "The thing I like best," he says, "is that I can tell anyone I want to go to hell. I'm a plain guy. I can always open a gas station to make a livin'. What's the matter? You don't think I'd be fit for it?"

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

YOM KIPPUR IN ELBERFELD

Reconciliation and Serenity

ELSE LASKER-SCHUELER

ELSE LASKER-SCHUELER, one of the most original figures in modern German literature, has been called "a Hebrew poetess in the German tongue." She once said: "They wanted to translate my poems into Hebrew, but they are already Hebrew poems." She was born in Elberfeld, Germany, into a noted family of rabbis, scholars, and community leaders, the Schuelers, but early on became an eccentric and a bohemian, calling herself, out of her passion for things Oriental, "Princess Tino of Baghdad" and "Prince Yussuf of Thebes." She died in Palestine early in 1945, at the age of sixty-eight. *Hebräerland* (Land of the Hebrews) was among the last of her many volumes of poetry and prose. Readers desirous of knowing more about her are directed to Heinz Politzer's article "The Blue Piano of Else Lasker-Schueler" in our April 1950 issue. The prose sketch, *Versoehnungstag,* appears here for the first time in English translation. It is taken from *Else Lasker-Schueler: Dichtungen und Dokumente,* edited by Ernst Ginsberg, and published by permission of the Koesel-Verlag of Munich. The translation of the piece is by Harry Zohn.—ED.

THERE is not a Jew who does not think of his parents on this day, the holiest of the year. To my father and mother the Day of Atonement was the birthday celebration of Jewry. It has been this to Jews in all countries, on every continent, and to their children and children's children. The world of the Jew will eternally include this day, and it will, at some time, stand before God as a creation in His own image.

Hatred and strife are sung to sleep smiling, like tired, stubborn children. On the eve of the Day of Atonement we moved on tiptoe, lest we should disturb the sweet air of devotion. The table, with its damask cloth, is set for the high Angel of Atonement who is born anew each year to every Jewish house. Far away from the parental home, the daughter and the son are admonished by the Day of Atonement, a memory become a form, from whose brow the star of peace shines forth. Jews, dressed in their holiday best, tenderly present the Day of Atonement to their fellow Jews, and to all their fellow townsmen. . . . Rancor disappears from the heart; error, it becomes evident, was the sole cause of strife. On this day our hands are there to clasp yours. Hemlock grows on the site of the unreconciled encounter.

The candles were lit at dusk on the eve of the Day of Atonement; and in my home, my father was the only one still missing from the peaceful, flower-bedecked table. The flowers remained serene amidst the milky porcelain dishes and the fragrant soup bowl. We could hear father's restless footsteps over our heads. He made use of the entire first floor for dressing, and now and then a harsh imprecation cradled in a psalm would issue from the parlor. . . . But even there, in the first, second, third mirrors, he failed to push the collar button in. . . . The button had grown overnight, or was it the devil's doing! Our cook Dora, whom we called "The Red Cat," hurried to his side, but soon we heard her sneaking downstairs, meowing poisonously; she even gave notice. Elise was sent up to Mr. Schueler; she was patienter, listening as my father explained to her the meaning of the Day of Atone-

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ment. It was she who always picked out the non-pinching high-button shoes for him, from his regiment of shoes, all twelve pairs standing at attention along the wall. . . . My father liked smart boots, and well-tailored suits. His snow-white hair and beard had been washed with violet-scented soap and carefully combed, the tips of his mustache twirled, and now he came in to us to the Atonement dinner, an air of promise about him and his eyes turned piously inward. We children could hardly contain our laughter, until he himself laughingly reproved us: it was a solemn occasion!

WE WERE sitting around the table now, not exactly like a family, but like a little world apart, each one of us a being of different make-up, with various intermingling elements of the blood but separated too, for better or for worse—nations united on the day of God. As the youngest, I was always permitted to sit next to my adored mother, who secretly put a tidbit into the pocket of my little checkered dress. I felt like Life Eternal next to her who, one day, had given birth to me; that evening, in the warm velvet of the room, I remembered how I used to play in the meadow under her heart. Whenever I think back to it my eyes half close again, when I write about it the letters bleed on the snowy paper.

First my pre-warmed plate would be filled, then my father was served. He loved marrow balls and stealthily kept count of the number which the soup ladle mercilessly made disappear into the various plates; for all the attention he paid them, the marrow balls might have been made of flour paste! Sitting on my dear father's left, my sister Martha Theresia was wool-gathering, her almond-shaped eyes like moons in her olive face. My other sister, Annamarie, the loveliest flower in the Wupper Valley, would sometimes link her arm with the strong hussar's arm of my second brother; there was something so helpless about her delicacy. Seated between my middle brother and my eldest, who had come home from school for the holiday, my youngest brother, Paul Karl Schueler, feasted with great modesty and friendliness. . . . After the soup came fish in butter sauce, and lovely potatoes. Each time my father inquired to make sure that the fish was not eel—Moses forbade that kind of fish which preyed on dead bodies. And then came filet, garnished with vegetables, and the yellow plum compote for which we two children, that is, my father and I, had a special weakness. Nor did he seem to notice that my oldest sister was filling his plate with the rest of the compote—he went on lecturing us: one ought to stop eating while still hungry, that was the advice given him and his parents of twenty-two brothers and sisters by the famous medical authority of his Westphalian home town, who had been physician in charge of a thousand incurables. This went on until suddenly a flame came through the door opened by the servant, the flame licking at the plum pudding. My mother liked to serve this lighted food for dessert, and I was proud of so distinguished and dangerous a dish—plum pudding with fire and wine sauce! At length my father put his big napkin in his coat pocket . . . covered his dear head with his hand (it had to be covered in humility before God), and quickly, like an *extempore* exercise before the end of class, muttered. . . . *"Shema Yisroel, adonoi elohenu, adonoi echod."*

THEREUPON he took the arm of my eldest sister, his daughter Martha Theresia, left the house, and walked through the nocturnal streets to the west end of town, to the synagogue. He had long since forgotten my mother's plea to behave himself during the sermon at least. My father regarded the Day of Atonement as the greatest event of the year. On this day he forgot even his buildings and his plans. He was the most boisterous man I have ever met in my life, always with an imp sitting somewhere on the cushion of his red heart. Certainly he wasn't gay-spirited from the depth of his heart (I can hear the literati asking me about that)—he was frolicsome in the breadth. He streamed, he surged, he destroyed; no dampener was on his spirits, and he indeed could butt his head through the wall. Suffering and Sorrow wore carnival bells when he crossed their path, and Joy tore his door off its hinges. As for his anger—it could rage mightily and so it did, in front of droll stage sets that threatened to collapse. My father never laid hands on anyone, but the maids often hid me in the built-in kitchen cupboard. If my father

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found me, I was punished—by not being allowed to go to school.

No sooner had he and my sister stepped inside the house of God than my father banged the door shut, thoughtlessly, just as at home; and his voice, which had some bit of roguery to communicate to every Jew, was audible to the farthest reaches of the balcony, where my sister Martha Theresia would take her place in one of the children's seats. And when my father had finally spotted his daughter with the white-plumed hat upstairs, again he forgot to keep himself in check—if her neighbors were not to his liking. He disturbed the services without intending any sin; he fasted faithfully, uncomplainingly, without so much as even turning in thought to home where the water was already boiling in the coffee machine for the Mocha he used to break his fast with. Considerately, the evening star emerged from the clouds a quarter of an hour earlier than on other evenings of the year; still the Gentile caretaker wasn't late, and he would say to my father: "Mr. Schueler, in all politeness, I'm liable to lose my job in this Jewish church if I don't get you out of here." My father took it in good part—this caretaker happened to be the brother of his old errand boy Robert, and he knew what he was about. Then, too, he earned a *taler* when he escorted my sister from the gallery and cautiously led her by her fingertips to the little garden of the synagogue, where my father and she then waited for our friends. . . .

The Star of David at the front of the synagogue's cupola was sending out its beams as the Jews left their temple, and to this day when I see it with my open eyes, I truly believe it diffuses its light. . . . Humbly, devotedly, the cantor, the holy man, bending over the Torah in front of the Ark, sings the psalms of an atonement that is as old as the stars. It is good to be a Jew, provided one has never evaded one's Jewishness, has remained loyal to it and become one with it, not led astray by the world's vanity, but laved by the River Jordan. Who could wrest me away from the age-old bones of Jehovah, unshakable rock! Each day Jews are made to undergo trials, and contumely tastes bitter to their palates, but gives rise to strength; yet not every Jew succeeds in preserving in his blood the ancestral flavor. . . .

* * *

Else Lasker-Schueler, in a letter to the painter Franz Marc:

Franz, yesterday I was in the synagogue, but I soon left for home. One should not remain in the palace of God any longer than the duration of the heart's prayer. I love the Day of Atonement; the first kings of the Jews must already have observed it. The blood needs no drink on that day—it rushes toward God. My father observed the day and fasted; he was the Till Eulenspiegel of the untamed Jews, and his prayer for union with God made its way from his lips like a toast. He had never sat by the waters of Babylon and mourned, he had never crept with bowed back through the doleful rain of ghetto streets. Everything in him was bright and bubbly. He owned the city and its every house, and every man and all the property were his to give away. . . .

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ON THE HORIZON

EXHIBITING THE FAMILY OF MAN

"The World's Most Talked About Photographs"

HILTON KRAMER

ON FEBRUARY 22, 1955, six thousand people spent the damp, gray afternoon of Washington's Birthday looking at a photography exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art. It was the most spectacular attendance record in the museum's twenty-five-year history, marred only by a stubborn lady who was later reported in the papers to have demanded her admission refunded on the grounds that there were no paintings on view—obviously a creature unwilling to make adjustments necessary to the vagaries of modern museology.

All in all, more than a quarter of a million people jammed the museum to see "The Family of Man" exhibition in New York; and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, where the exhibition was installed during the summer, reported an even larger per capita attendance in that city. There is no reason to believe that the show will draw smaller crowds in Dallas, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Pittsburgh, where it will be seen during the months ahead, for it has already received heavier press coverage than any comparable "artistic" event in our history. Following its American tour, the exhibition will travel abroad under the auspices of the United States Information Agency.

Nor has the fantastic success of this project been limited to the exhibition itself. In book form *The Family of Man** has been issued in both a paperback, mass-market edition, selling for a dollar, and a more sumptuous, de luxe edition at ten dollars. By July 15, only three weeks after publication, the dollar edition alone was bought by a quarter of a million people, and the book has continued to hold a steady place on the best-seller lists. Last June, columnist Bob Considine had prophesied that "Judging from advance sales *The Family of Man* will become as much a part of the family library as the Bible." There was, I think, no irony in this invocation of the Bible as a means of measuring the book's success; it could not even be regarded as hyperbolic when so many publicists were invoking the Deity himself—as it were, the "original" Creator of this "family."

The man responsible for "The Family of Man" exhibition is Edward Steichen, Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, and himself one of the most accomplished photographers of the century. It was he who conceived the idea, devoting three years to the selection of 503 photographs from a total that exceeded two million. And there is little doubt that Steichen regards it as the climax of his long career,

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Is THERE a new kind of "politics" in the air? This report would indicate there is—and there is not. HILTON KRAMER, managing editor of the new monthly *Arts*, was born in Gloucester, Mass., in 1928, studied at Syracuse, Columbia, and Harvard, and has contributed art criticism to *Partisan Review* and other magazines. His first appearance in COMMENTARY was with an article on the painters Hyman Bloom and Jack Levine in the June 1955 issue.

*De luxe edition published for the Museum of Modern Art by Simon and Schuster; 226 pp., including 34 pp. of installation photographs of show. Paperback edition published by the Maco Magazine Corp. for the Museum of Modern Art, 192 pp.

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as a kind of monument which embodies his talents and beliefs.

It is a career which itself forms a historical prologue relevant to the exhibition's cultural significance. Beginning at the turn of the century as both photographer and painter, Steichen became an associate of the late Alfred Stieglitz in his twin endeavor to promote the new art of photography along with the new painting and sculpture being created in Europe and America. As Stieglitz's colleague, Steichen frequented the Paris studios of such artists as Rodin, Brancusi, and Matisse, often photographing the masters themselves and bringing back examples of their work for exhibition in Stieglitz's galleries. Steichen was thus one of the early partisans of modern art in a period which for most of us is history; a period when the greatest plastic art of the century was of practically no concern to the world in which it was created.

During World War I, Steichen was put in command of the U.S. army's aerial photography. It was one of those unlikely moments in the history of a career when a man's avant-garde aesthetic inclinations could be fulfilled by a military assignment, for aerial photography was still in an unformed state, requiring an experimental and imaginative intelligence to clarify it. The assignment sharpened Steichen's photographic interests, and he was soon to abandon painting altogether. In the 1920's and early 1930's he worked as a photographer for the Condé Nast organization, his work appearing frequently in *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue,* and he was eventually to become involved in fashion photography as well. During both World War II and the war in Korea he was again occupied with military assignments.

In 1947 Steichen became Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art; in many ways it must have seemed as if his career had come full circle from the early days with Stieglitz, for here again his photographic interests were to be carried out in a context which underscored, above all, their *artistic* meaning.

But the vicissitudes of a half century of photographic culture could not be undone; nor—what Steichen's work in the Museum might have promised—could a viable synthesis be wrought out of the conflicting artistic, commercial, technical, journalistic, and ideological demands which are now brought to bear on that image-making process which was still an esoteric art in Steichen's boyhood. His own versatile career is a brief history of the diffusion of photography in our culture; in the process, the *art* of photography was bound to get away, lost in a jungle of science and journalism.

What is underscored in "The Family of Man" exhibition is the finality with which Steichen has abandoned himself to the journalistic solution of his problematic role in the Museum. This was foreshadowed, of course, in his earlier, wartime exhibitions, "The Road to Victory" and "Power in the Pacific," but it is most fully articulated in "The Family of Man." And as so often happens in our culture when art abandons itself to journalism, its mode of articulation has a distinct ideological cast—in this instance, a cast which embodies all that is most facile, abstract, sentimental, and rhetorical in liberal ideology.

The rhetoric begins verbally straightaway in the giddy prologue which Steichen invited his brother-in-law, Carl Sandburg, to write for the exhibition (and the book). A representative paragraph will suffice to render the tone of this prologue:

> People! flung wide and far, born into toil, struggle, blood and dreams, among lovers, eaters, drinkers, workers, loafers, fighters, players, gamblers. Here are ironworkers, bridgemen, musicians, sandhogs, miners, builders of huts and skyscrapers, jungle hunters, landlords and the landless, the loved and unloved, the lonely and abandoned, the brutal and the compassionate—one big family hugging close to the ball of Earth for its life and being.

Following a heavy dose of this verbosity, which reads like nothing so much as a schoolboy imitating a young American poet of forty years ago named Carl Sandburg, Steichen himself defines the exhibition as "a mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life—as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world." His method of depicting this "essential oneness" is to place in juxtaposition photographs from all parts of the world, playing up every superficial resemblance in custom, posture, and atti-

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tude, until he has whipped up a pictorial rhetoric very like Sandburg's terrible parody of Whitmanesque sentiment. He thus succeeds in making abstract an art which relies above all on the *particular* for its integrity.

Yet, much as it might discomfort us to witness this wholesale abandonment of artistic principles, we should be guilty of empty caviling if "The Family of Man" had instead offered us some striking illumination about the world we live in, as journalism is sometimes able to do; if it had really penetrated beneath the surface of our experience. The fact is that it does not; that it cannot, because the assumptions about the world we live in on which it is based have canceled out its capacity for relevance or truth.

THE "scenario" of the book—which is somewhat different from the exhibition—begins with pictures of courtship, marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth, and proceeds with a more diffuse account of childhood, family life, and the physical labors by which men earn their living. There are interludes devoted to recreation, education, funerals, religious observance, and various manifestations of loneliness and misfortune. It concludes with more photographs of children.

Many of these photographs are very engaging, and a few are beautiful. But does it tell us anything about our lives, about the lives of anyone—anything we don't already know, that is—to juxtapose Robert Doisneau's droll pictures of Parisians and a picture by Laurence LeGuay of young "lovers" in New Guinea? On the contrary, it simply begs the question of the universality of experience it is meant to celebrate. If Steichen had been the least bit susceptible to what anthropologists call "cultural shock"—that sudden, brute intuition of the "otherness" of cultures different from our own—he would have had to withdraw the LeGuay picture at once, and thus hold open the possibility that "the essential oneness of mankind" is continuously held at bay by the nagging details of our actual lives.

And what impression, one wonders, are we being asked to make of the fact that two *Life* photographers have brought off the feat of posing two family groups—Negroes from Bechuanaland and white farmers from America—so that they seem at first glance to have certain resemblances: the generations are gathered together; there are the very young and the very old; in the photograph from Bechuanaland there is an ancient-looking matriarch with wrinkled face and withered breasts, in the American picture there is an old white-haired grandmother of marked character. The question persists: in what sense today are they "as relatives," as the caption invites us to believe? On nearly every page of the book (just as at every turn in the exhibition), whether with pathos or irony, whether the *dramatis personae* are young lovers embracing, old women gawking, children playing, adults dancing; whether the photographs are exquisite in their depictions or utterly fallen into cliché—everywhere we are invited to believe in this relatedness.

The vacancy of thought which characterizes this notion of "relatedness" comes into sharper focus when we examine the few scattered photographs of political violence. (Their scarcity seems essential to the ideological assumptions of the book.) The most memorable is a picture of German troops marching Jewish civilians (including children) through the streets of the Warsaw ghetto; taken by an anonymous German photographer against the background of Warsaw in smoke and flames, it was used as an exhibit in the Nuremberg Trial. There is an equally disquieting photograph of two unarmed men hurling pieces of rubble at oncoming tanks in the streets of what looks like Berlin—it may be a picture of the now famous "June Days" in East Berlin but it is not so labeled. And there is a mob scene in Shanghai, photographed by Henri Cartier-Bresson, which infers an intense feeling of political foreboding without actually depicting any violent action.

These few photographs, with one or two others in the collection, are so crushingly contemporary and particular that they remove themselves completely from the facile lessons in "relatedness" which they are intended to demonstrate. And they serve to remind us of how little reality is represented in this visual morality play on the theme of man's "essential oneness." They admit for a moment the appalling fact that the most profound link between peoples today is their *political* link; that if races are "as relatives" in any sense, they are as *political* relatives. And in the presence of that fact, all pieties

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about "the universal elements . . . in the everydayness of life" are revealed for what they are: a self-congratulatory means for obscuring the urgency of real problems under a blanket of ideology which takes for granted the essential goodness, innocence, and moral superiority of the international "little man," "the man in the street," the abstract, disembodied hero of a world-view which regards itself as superior to mere politics. "The Family of Man" is thus a reassertion in visual terms of all that has been discredited in progressive ideology.

The continuing appeal of this illusionary image of the world, which takes refuge in a supra-political "realism" in order to evade the more vexing ambiguities of reality, was demonstrated to a staggering extent in the press coverage of both the book and the exhibition. Almost without exception, the press took up the matter in the terms Steichen had laid down, as a paradigm of man's "relatedness" beyond politics. (Only a few art critics raised murmurs about the artistic implications of photography, using it as a stick with which to beat modern painting.) Papers of every political description joined in this applause for an image of the world which relieved them of the necessity to think politically; and in this, "The Family of Man" seems to arrive at its most opportune moment, when the atmosphere of both domestic politics and the "Geneva spirit" conspires to urge wholesale acceptance of rhetorical solutions to critical issues. Augusta Strong, in the *Daily Worker*, summed it up for everybody when she declared, a little hysterically, "Suddenly you are catapulted into a world completely beyond your worries and concerns of the moment."

This applause should not be allowed to obscure the fact that "The Family of Man" leaves the art of photography exactly where it was before, suffering from widespread confusion about its aesthetic status—a confusion which "The Family of Man" itself has now done so much to congeal. And it is this confusion which makes photography peculiarly vulnerable to this sort of ideological infection whenever it is elevated from its common, journalistic tasks. When it is most meaningful—which is to say, when it is most *artistic*—photography embodies a feeling for experience which is not susceptible to easy programming. Contrary to popular opinion, the vision of photography, which seems so readily representational and "social," is actually a more *personal* vision than that of any of the traditional visual arts. Even its polar opposite, contemporary abstract painting, is of aesthetic necessity a more "public" art insofar as it projects a world of forms which symbolize feeling at its most generalized, most universalized levels. (Half of the attacks on abstract painting stem from an inability to apprehend, i.e., to *see,* this world of forms; the other half may be traced to the fact that the majority of artists in the genre fail to create these forms adequately.) Photography remains contingent on circumstance and personality, and the individual sense of style which the best photographers retrieve from this circumstantiality derives above all from an acute sense of particulars.

The onslaught of mass pictorial journalism has necessarily confined this sense of style to a fugitive status, and in this it resembles the role of art in our culture generally. What is disheartening is to see the agency which claims to preside over the artistic values of photography tumble so easily into the vulgar ideological postures which, with less fanfare and less prestige, if also less taste, thousands of periodicals every day embrace as a matter of course.

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THE STUDY OF MAN

NAZISM ON THE ASSEMBLY LINE

Process of Oblivion

SOLOMON F. BLOOM

WHAT is a book? We cannot hope that it shall aways fulfill John Milton's vision. "A good book," Milton said in defending the freedom to publish in *Areopagitica,* "is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." So much has the idea of a book deteriorated that one hardly knows today what to expect between hard covers. In the academic world, perhaps nothing has accelerated this deterioration so much as the practice of compiling any disparate and disconnected pieces that an enterprising editor can find a common label for. Is it the industrial assembly line, or the collective spirit of our age, that has suggested to scholars the novel notion of hunting in packs?

It is true that group life can be a powerful stimulant to learning and writing. Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* germinated in an appreciative *salon* which heard them read before it saw them in print. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* originated in a discussion group that met regularly to canvass its problems. But neither group nor *salon* pretended to do the job itself. In the end a solitary individual had to shut himself up in a room and do some highly private worrying and inditing.

Group effort is, of course, essential for production of an encyclopedic character. The Cambridge histories were classic cases in point. But even there the intellectual coherence of the group determines whether its joint work crosses the line that separates factual survey and description from insight and interpretation. Among collective enterprises of this sort, the *Histoire génerale,* edited by Lavisse and Rambaud, was distinguished by a high degree of integration and unity. Its contributors, unlike the miscellaneous group that wrote the chapters of the Cambridge histories, shared a point of view, a method of analysis, and a manner of expression.

Yet today symposia are produced by people who haven't met and books are written by groups that have nothing in common. It is hardly consoling to reflect that it is usually the most complex subjects that are assigned, on the principle of the division of labor, like Adam Smith's pins, to tribes of strangers. Nothing could be more praiseworthy than the object of the book—let us call it that—before us: *The Third Reich.** At Beirut in 1948 the General Conference of UNESCO resolved to sponsor a study by leading historians of "the methods

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A MODERN prejudice holds that two scholars—if organized in a "project"—are always better than one, truth being an antagonist inclined to yield itself to mass assault rather than in individual combat. That this is a prejudice, is made clear by SOLOMON F. BLOOM in his critique of a recent Unesco-sponsored group effort to understand Nazism, *The Third Reich.* Mr. Bloom, now professor of history at Brooklyn College, was born in Rumania in 1903 and came to this country in 1920. He is author of *The World of Nations,* a study of the national implications in the work of Karl Marx, and is presently completing an interpretive history of the common forces shaping Europe and the United States in the last two centuries.

**The Third Reich: A Study published under the Auspices of the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies and with the Assistance of the UNESCO.* Edited by Maurice Baumont, John H. E. Fried, and Edmond Vermeil (Frederick A. Praeger, 910 pp., $9.00).

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and procedure used to propagate Nazism and Fascism in the period preceding the Second World War: this should help to make possible the identification of similar movements in the future, from the first moment of their appearance. The conclusions reached in this report ought to be made known as widely as possible." (Italian Fascism was dropped from the report because the authors dealing with it were not ready in time.) It was thought essential to study the causes and the historical setting of Nazism as well as its methods, although this changed the original simple aim of the project.

UNESCO persuaded the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies to undertake the planning and supervision of the project. The council appointed a Standing Committee, which in turn appointed three sub-commissions. It was these sub-commissions that assigned subjects on the philosophic origins, the circumstances, and the techniques of Nazism, the final sub-divisions into which the project was divided. Twenty-seven historians, hailing from half a dozen countries, including Germany, most of them able and well-known men, went to work.

What could be more scientific, efficient, and up to date?

The result is a tome of more than nine hundred pages which is anything but a manual making it easy for people to distinguish Nazi movements at a glance, and in the germ. The sponsors were careful—and I suppose happy—to leave the responsibility for the conclusions to the individual contributors. That will satisfy everybody, except perhaps the reader who may look for the certified detecting rod he has been promised.

This is not, of course, to say that when twenty-seven accredited scholars play on a theme of this sort, nothing good can come of it. There is much material here, on a wide, indeed a bewildering, variety of subjects. Not all of it is new or surprising—but then novelty is hardly desirable in a subject where originality is not synonymous with penetration. It is virtually impossible, in a limited space, to describe and evaluate, or even summarize adequately, the range, content, and points of view of these essays.

By way of illustration, *The Third Reich* contains a series of meaty chapters—mostly by French scholars—on the ideological and literary sources that fed Nazism. Edmond Vermeil, Jean Jacques Anstett, Louis Sauzin, Claude David, and Roy Pascal have written effectively and objectively on the masquerade of prejudice as folk poetry, chauvinism as "world historical" mission, and amoralism as Nature worship that disfigured the German scene for a century. We may notice, as a sample, Anstett's article on Paul Lagarde, a quiet and penetrating analysis of a "radical conservative" writer of Bismarck's day. He identifies and labels the evil inherent in Lagarde's preachment of a mission that placed Germans in inevitable conflict with Slavs and Frenchmen, and in his exaltation of the interests of the "organic" nation above religion and humanity. Lagarde was "anti-Semitic out of resentment: the Jewish people had succeeded by virtue of its national religion in being what the German people had not yet succeeded in being: a nation. . . . Hatred and self-contempt are therefore a form of compensation for a deep-seated sense of inferiority." Lagarde countered one messianism with another, but a messianism indifferent to universal ideals.

A Dutch scholar, Louis de Jong, gives a judicious account of the successes, and failures, of the Fifth Column. There is a succinct summary of the anti-Semitic policies by Léon Poliakov, author of the invaluable *Harvest of Hate*. A. J. P. Taylor employs his accustomed scalpel to good effect in laying open the intrigues and maneuvers that preceded "The Seizure of Power." There are chapters on the role of the Communists, on methods of propaganda, on economic conditions and developments, and on religious issues.

In general, the French and English contributions are objective and astringent in tone and factual in content, while the Germans run to heavy "philosophy" and "philosophy of history." Some of them are defensive, and even apologetic. The Publishing Committee has found it necessary, for example, to add a note suggesting that the estimates of reparations paid to the Allies after 1919 that are cited by Professor Friedrich Lütge in an article on economic conditions are based on partial sources.

The chief trouble is that the book breaks clear down the middle. More than one third of it—and probably the most valuable third—is devoted to the intellectual and spiritual antecedents of Nazism. Nothing else than these can explain adequately, if not the reason for the political rise of Nazism, the far more significant fact of its acceptance and toleration

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by respectable circles and conservative elements in Germany. Yet several German contributors challenge the premise of this section. Professor J. J. Schokking of the University of Cologne can detect in Nazism no doctrine or aim at all. To him, it was only an armory of techniques for seizing power: provocation, intimidation, infiltration. Jews were harried and murdered not "for reasons to be inferred from any racial theory, but because the pleasure of Jew-baiting symbolized submission to the party's collective will." Nazism, he contends, had no race philosophy. "The close connections that unquestionably existed between Nazi activities and attempts to 'purify' the German people in accordance with the precepts of the so-called *race theories [why 'so-called'—did they not* exist?] were far more complicated. This question, however, does not fall within the scope of this article." That is unfortunate. If Professor Schokking will look at Hitler's *Tischgespräche,* he would find a blueprint of a racial empire, down to the music that would be played to lull the slave peoples, and the question of whether, and how, they were to be treated for toothache.

Professor Theodor Litt of Bonn University employs another technique for sundering the connection between German history and Nazism. He converts ideas into "ideas," things inherently suspect and fake. " 'Ideas,' thanks to their ambivalence, can be only too easily changed into the opposite of what they originally meant. And a people which takes ideas as seriously as the German people does [and as, evidently, Professor Litt does not] is particularly open to their inherent dangers." In other words, no matter how high-minded a culture Germany might have and no matter how it might be degraded and perverted by a self-interested political party, the German people would fall for it, and all this because it is too fond of ideas! Corresponding to Jewish anti-Semitism, there seems to be a German anti-Germanism.

THE most remarkable exercise in disengagement is produced by the most eminent of the German contributors to *The Third Reich.* Professor Gerhard Ritter of the University of Freiburg-Breisgau has written the leading article of the second section of the book, which deals with "the circumstances which made possible the transformation of an ideology into a political programme." It has the promising title of "The Historical Foundations of the Rise of National Socialism." Professor Ritter rejects all attempts "to explain the distinctly militarist nature of German nationalism by its origins at the time of the wars of liberation (1813), and the glorification of war throughout the nineteenth century, which is shown by quotations from all sorts of authors." Such procedures "may be useful in illustrating the historical characteristics of German views on the state, even in Hitler's time." They "become sterile if they are used to explain the rapid decline of the Weimar Republic and the triumphal ascent of the Hitlerian Party from 1930 to 1933." Germany was "unprepared internally" for that ascent. If Professor Ritter's judgment were restricted to the mechanics of *obtaining power, his case might be arguable.* But he ventures to say that "history can never be written by means of quotations from literature, since it is almost always possible to find such quotations contradicted elsewhere." Are there then no controls by which to validate the use of literary and ideological sources? Are there no criteria for determining the relevance, effectiveness, and consequence of ideas? Ritter's position has been examined by Professor Albrecht von Rantzau in his essay on "The Glorification of the State in German Historical Writing," published in Hans Kohn's collection of recent writings on *German History* (1955). Von Rantzau characterizes Ritter rather paradoxically as "a strongly disillusioned apologist for nationalism." Ritter traces the evil to the influence of the West on Germany. It was Democracy, invented by the French, and Evolution, invented by the English, that introduced the demonic and irrational into German political life.

Ritter's more positive contribution to the discussion, however, reveals his true attitude. He ascribes the rise of Nazism to Germany's quest for a leader whom she could trust to fuse her energies. "If the situation is simplified somewhat," he writes, ". . . Hitler's mission in history was to accomplish that which the Emperor [William II] and his government had been unable to accomplish in the First World War: to weld the nation into a closed, warlike community under the leadership of a really popular *Fuehrer,* respected by all." Ritter extols the examples of Lloyd George and Clemenceau, who "could guide their people through waves of hope and despair, through attacks of pessimism and failures, and inspire them with courage to continue—to continue until the end of

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the crisis, when American aid began to make itself felt."

PROFESSOR RITTER emphasizes the natural need of the German people to show "its worth was as great as its vitality," and to satisfy itself that it held "the place and rank which it deserves." This need bred "a forced atmosphere, composed of national consciousness of strength, of inferiority complex, and of the fear of being cut off from other countries." It led to a yearning for a higher coherence and integration of purpose and policy. But our author is not critical of the motives and authenticity of this quest. He does not stop to ask himself, coherence for what? After unification, Germany had been coherent enough to create a successful industrial economy, to develop complex and energetic educational institutions, and to achieve a territorial and diplomatic position that was all but dominant on the European continent. Germany impressed the world, even if she did not impress herself, as a nation, if anything, *too* coherent and electric. What then was lacking? It seems that the German leaders, having conceived the ambition to dominate the Continent completely, and to extend their domination beyond it, had failed to weld their nation into a unity sufficiently tense to make good that ambition. Professor Ritter does not raise the question of whether the ambition was either justified or feasible. Would he argue that if William II had been a Clemenceau he would have won the First World War? And if all Germany lacked was *"Führerschaft,"* why then did she not win the Second World War, when she had it in plenty?

One is left with the notion that a great nation is one which can integrate itself and breed the leadership to win world wars. Iron coherence, and warlike self-assertion, alone validate national self-esteem. They are worth while in themselves, regardless of aim or result. Professor Ritter pictures Germany as a romantic hero isolated from the world and confronting it wilfully. His conception of leadership smacks of the miraculous. He forgets that such leaders as Lloyd George and Clemenceau were typical products of the parliamentary arena, one of the most significant contributions of that Western spirit which he condemns.

In short, Professor Ritter exemplifies the very disease that the intellectual historians, whose methods he rejects, have tried to diagnose. He is object rather than subject in this discussion. His case is important, for, as von Rantzau observes, Professor Ritter's "publications after 1945 may be . . . taken as highly representative of the [German] historical scholarship of the present day."

THE German contributions to *The Third Reich* raise some disturbing questions in the mind of the reader. We have noticed the disposition to sever Hitlerism from the mainstream of German history. When it is accepted, the blame is laid on the populace rather than the leadership and the upper classes. The Nazis knew, observes Professor Litt, that "there is no better way of mastering a German than by the lofty formulae of a metaphysical system conferring on any and every political action the consecration of eternity." Ritter accuses his compatriots of lacking critical ability, and "political and moral flair." This lack seems to him to be "the most serious guilt with which the Germans can be reproached and this reproach is not diminished by the fact that Germany was certainly not the only country to lack political and moral instinct where Hitler was concerned"—a common and typical proviso.

The role of the conservatives, the military, and the industrialists, is distinctly underplayed. The Germans have left it to an Englishman—Professor Taylor—to point out the simple fact that Hitler did not seize power, but was *given* it. The calculations behind that gift are familiar to everybody. "If we look back over this wretched story, we see a man bent on success on the one side, and a group of politicians without ideas or principles on the other . . . the greatest responsibility lay with those who let Hitler in and established him as Chancellor. Hitler recognized it himself."

Finally, there is an ambivalent attitude toward the "Führer." A goggle-eyed admiration of the skill and the "virtuosity" of the demagogic methods of the Nazis breaks through more than once. Ever since the successes of Bismarck, Germans have exhibited a fascination for trickery, duplicity, and magic in politics. The leaders who organized the cabinet of January 1933 and gave Hitler the Chancellorship thought that they were perpetrating a very clever stroke and duping each other. When Hitler began to "put things over" on the "simpletons" who governed England and France—this was his own estimate of them—

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the enthusiasm over his sharpness and cunning hardly knew bounds. It is not easy to turn around now. The result is a general desire to forget Hitler. Only one essay in this book deals with him, and it was written by an English scholar. Unfortunately Allan Bullock's discussion of Hitler's political ideas is conventional. "Up to the present," Professor Ritter observes accurately, "precise scientific research on Hitler's intellectual origins has scarcely begun." What are German, and other, historians waiting for? What will become, in another decade or two, of the host of witnesses who might have valuable testimony to give?

Perhaps all these tendencies fall into a pattern.

EAST TO THE SUBURBS

SPENCER BROWN

A RATTLESNAKE in a slim desert, the train
Coming east from coal country, under hills
Of gray culm and raw clay past waterfalls
Acid-polluted, approaches the clean throne
Of tall finance, whose wooded park within
The arc of the restrictive covenant
Trim brokers tend whom flowering wives content,
While hearty doctors groom and clip the lawn.

Here though the wide house has a narrow door,
The well-Cape-Codded architect foretold
Another need unmentioned save in jest:
Niche in curved stair for swinging the dark chest,
Coffin-door into gardens green and gold.
The narrowest house must have the widest door.

SPENCER BROWN is, of course, known to our readers for his critical essays. This is the first poem by him to appear in our pages, but he has published his verse in other periodicals, and a book of it is soon to appear.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

The Sephardim Vindicated

To the Editor of Commentary:

I think Dr. Cecil Roth is a little unkind to his Sephardi brethren in his article in your August issue. He rather minimizes their great achievements and influence . . . in Jewish history and culture. There exists an aristocracy of the spirit and the mind. Besides the Jewish giants still universally read and honored, Maimonides, Halevi, etc., the Jews of Spain had among them a great number (unusually large for those days) of men of scholarship and erudition—scholars and physicians and financiers at the courts of Spain, and professors in medicine, astronomy, etc. at the universities. Not without reason do we speak of the "Golden Age of Spain." To that glorious period both Sephardi and Ashkenazi look back with pride—it is not a question of aristocracy or supremacy.

If there ever was a "claim to aristocracy," surely the Sephardim could not have based this claim on their particular pronunciation of the Hebrew language. And even if their pronunciation is not the "correct" one, as Dr. Roth states, something in their services and their ritual evokes a feeling of admiration. . . . They are most particular in the correct pronunciation of each individual word. In Spain they were eager students of Hebrew grammar and produced a number of outstanding grammarians; hence the study of Hebrew grammar continued to be practiced among the Sephardim, while it was ignored and looked down upon among East European Jews. Therefore the Sephardim have maintained in their services and even in their frequently used Hebrew expressions a more accurate pronunciation and accent. Also, their Ladino is more grammatical than Yiddish: "Ladino is in no wise as corrupt a language as is the Judeo-German," says Dr. M. Kayserling in his article in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* on Sephardim. The conservative attitude of the Sephardim is further evident in their tendency to keep the ancient melodies much closer to the original and not introduce the operatics or other extravaganzas of the Ashkenazi *hazan*. Dr. Roth himself admits that Ashkenazi hymns had "obscured the more simple pristine forms"; nor can I agree with him that the Sephardi hymns of, for instance, Judah Halevi are "less moving." How can one be moved by the extremely intricate and ununderstandable language of a Kalir?

Like the Jews of other countries, the Sephardim also adopted something of the manners and characteristics of their surroundings and among these is this hidalgo-mannerism of the Spaniard, this peculiar aristocratic attitude and behavior, even among the poorest. I doubt whether the "legend" of Spanish aristocracy was, as Dr. Roth states, spread through the writings of Disraeli. It was rather done, I think, (1) by Zangwill, who describes (with poetic exaggeration) this hidalgo-attitude of those he must have known in his time; and (2) even more by the people who knew those hidalgos. I remember a number of such "poor hidalgos" in the Sephardi synagogue in Amsterdam and I have seen them in Curaçao—but now, since the world war, they have gone forever, unless one or two are left in Bevis Marks.

(Rabbi) David A. Jessurun Cardozo
North Hackensack, New Jersey

How to Read

To the Editor of Commentary:

In Spencer Brown's article "Dr. Flesch's Cure for Reading Troubles" (August), one argument given to prove that nothing is seriously wrong with our educational product in the elementary schools (as far as ability to read is concerned) is that "the indications from educational research and testing are that we are now doing as good a job on reading as we did thirty years ago. . . ." Similar statements covering reading and arithmetic have been made regularly in recent years by the Superintendent of Schools of New York City. He has based his conclusions on the results of standard tests in reading and arithmetic given to all eighth-year pupils in the public schools. Time and again these official statistics have been brought forth to silence critics of present educational policies.

However, these statistics are not believed to be valid by those most familiar with the accomplishments of the graduates of our elementary

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schools, namely, the high school teachers. In regard to arithmetic, I can give first-hand testimony. At meetings of high school chairmen of mathematics departments of all New York City high schools, and at meetings of chairmen of various departments, I have repeatedly heard open statements of disbelief in the validity of the statistics in question. This opinion is well-nigh unanimous among high school people. In the May 1955 issue of *High Points,* an official publication of the High School Division of New York City, it is stated (p. 34) that "[High] Schools are not satisfied that intelligence quotients, reading achievement and arithmetic ability are being properly ascertained."

The reasons for the invalidity of the tests in question are easy for any school man to understand. The questions are known in advance. Any teacher anxious to produce a good record or desirous of helping her principal produce a good record might be tempted to drill her class on the test questions in advance of the official test. If only one out of five or so reports are higher than they should be, the city-wide median score will be significantly affected and the picture will be false.

This is not said in order to impute a lower moral code to the elementary school teachers. We high school teachers are prevented from exercising similar impulses to raise the scores of Regents examinations taken by our pupils by a rigid system of secrecy of questions to be asked, review of the marking by specialists at Albany, etc. No such precautions prevail in the city-wide reading and arithmetic testing.

My own experience as teacher and chairman of mathematics for thirty years convinces me that our pupils are poorer in arithmetical ability than children of equal general intelligence were ten or more years ago. Boys who do well in advanced algebra and in solid geometry stumble over simple arithmetic computations in a way that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. This, of course, slows down the work.

In my opinion, the chief fault in our educational system is not with the method of teaching this or that subject, but rather with the administrative rule of guaranteed promotion (also called 100 per cent promotion, continuous progress).

In a report of the New York State Department of Education, called "Mathematics for All High School Youth" (1953), appears this ominous statement: ". . . continuous progress in the elementary schools is here to stay. Consequently, the teachers of the upper grades may not assume that the children in their classes have mastered the topics of the lower grades. Teachers must teach all the essential topics of the preceding grades as well as their own grades. . . ." That is, the teacher of the ninth year has to teach all the essential topics of arithmetic as well as of algebra. Think of what this does to the standards of accomplishment, to the morale of the teacher, and to the training of those few talented students upon whom our future economic and military strength will rest.

It should have been clear from the beginning that taking from the pupil the *incentive* of needing to *earn* his promotion would lead to a slackening of effort and a consequent deterioration of achievement. If promotion is guaranteed, failure to meet grade standards can easily be excused by saying that the pupil is working up to his ability, nevertheless. If promotion is guaranteed, a poor method of teaching is not so likely to be shown up by failure to produce results.

Some say that there are many children who do not care enough about being promoted to be stirred into action by the threat of being left back. However, the great majority do want to be promoted, and they will set the climate of the classroom. They will frown on time-wasting classmates and not, as at present, make heroes of those who defy the teacher. As it is now, those pupils who want to learn have no compelling motive to restrain their less serious classmates.

The widespread lack of respect for teachers on the part of the pupils is bound to be affected for the better by changing to a system in which the teacher's good opinion is worth something to the pupil.

In a recent modification of its "continuous progress" rule of promotion, the New York City elementary school authorities have set the requirement that promotion will not be granted to those falling two years or more behind their grade standard in reading. (This came about after a blast from Deputy Mayor Henry Epstein in connection with a recent flare-up of juvenile delinquency.) Now, if it is wise to require a certain minimum of attainment in reading, the same holds for writing and arithmetic. After all, the vast majority of children will have no difficulty meeting the low standards in reading. They will still have no compelling stimulus to exert themselves to master the more difficult topics in arithmetic and to correct sloppy writing habits by practice at home. They will still act as a drag on their more willing and more accomplished classmates, especially in the upper grades. Minimum standards in writing and in arithmetic should be set up as prerequisites for promotion.

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Like another "noble experiment," 100 per cent promotion has been tried and it has failed. It is time to admit it. The wreckage, all of it, should be cleared away; and a school regimen should be set up once again that will earn the respect of the children, the cooperation of their parents, and the enthusiastic participation of the teachers.

ISRAEL KORAL

Chairman, Mathematics Dept.
Boys High School
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have no desire to defend Dr. Rudolph Flesch's book on the teaching of reading, particularly after having read Spencer Brown's analysis, but I do think that Mr. Brown should have introduced a strongly worded qualification. . . . When I read that "Good readers . . . skim over letters and take in whole words and whole phrases," and that it is a "known fact that the fast reader is a good reader," I asked myself, "good reader *of what?*" I think this an important question. For Mr. Brown to say simply "good readers" is not enough; he should have said "good readers *of printed matter in which style is of no importance.*"

The rapid, skimming method which Mr. Brown calls good reading surely should not be used in reading imaginative literature, not only verse, but dramatic and narrative prose as well. The person who reads literature in this manner may be able to outline the plot or argument, but he will miss most of the effect of the connotations of the words he has read, and rhythm and inflection will be lost on him. Perhaps style is of no importance to a child in primary school, but he will not always be a child, and as he grows older he will have to deal with style, not only in most of what he reads and writes, but also in most of what he hears and says. He may perhaps be able to escape from style in inter-office memos, scientific reports, and the like, but what of speeches, editorials, and—heaven knows—conversation, not to mention literature? To train him to read in a manner which makes him insensitive to style is to prepare him poorly for his future dealings with language.

Again and again in my classes I meet this half- and quarter-reading of literature. All I can do to fight it is to advise my students to read as if they were reading aloud, if not actually aloud, to ask them as often as possible to read aloud in class, and to make them attempt to analyze the styles of the works they read. Some students seem able to read a textbook in the social sciences using Mr. Brown's method and a poem using mine, but it is the thought of the others, who can never really read a poem, that prompts me to object to Mr. Brown's idea of a "good reader."

EDWIN S. BRIGGS

Wheaton College
Norton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It was gratifying to see COMMENTARY publish Spencer Brown's criticism of Dr. Flesch's book, so that those not in the education field can understand Dr. Flesch's errors.

I feel it is necessary, however, to add some more positive statements about the way in which reading is taught in today's schools. Most of the school systems with which I am familiar have adopted Basic Readers of the major publishing companies, who employ as consultants the most respected persons in the field of reading today: Drs. Gray, Russell, Gates, Monroe, etc. These reading series are published with accompanying Guide Books for the teachers which contain a well developed, sequential program of phonics and word analysis.

While it is true that children are first taught to read words by sight recognition without analysis of component parts, phonics are introduced as early as the pre-primer reading stage. The program, begun in the first grade and continued through the grades, develops in the following way:

1. Initial consonants are taught, using the words the children are familiar with.
2. Rhyming words of one syllable.
3. Root words and the addition of final *s, ed, ing* (Help, helps, helped, helping).
4. Consonant blends such as *br, sl, tr.*
5. Vowel sounds.
6. Prefixes, suffixes, and root words.
7. Syllables and accents.

This sequence of instruction includes both phonetic analysis and the structural analysis of words. Perhaps the main difference between Dr. Flesch's program of phonics and the modern program is one of approach. Flesch's program requires the teaching of isolated consonant and vowel sounds which are then put together to form words. The modern program emphasizes the *whole* word to insure comprehension, and then analyzes the component parts so that the child can develop skills for attacking new words independently.

In the classroom children are grouped according to their reading ability and given instruction on their level at their rate. One group might require more phonics drill while another group might require additional language development, emphasis on word meanings, prac-

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tice in comprehension, or practice in reading more rapidly. Where extreme difficulties appear it becomes necessary to examine the child's physical, emotional, environmental, and educational background, to diagnose the difficulty and the cause and to apply first aid in the needed areas. Where this practice is beyond the realm of the teacher's understanding or ability help is usually sought from a supervisor or remedial teacher.

Reading in school today is highly motivated and therefore more meaningful and interesting for the child. If instruction is continued on the child's own level he will experience success at each stage and enjoy the variety of rich reading material available today. . . .

We have been receiving COMMENTARY for many years and are grateful to you for the many fine and varied articles which you publish.

(Mrs.) BERNICE GOLDMARK
Teacher, Public Schools
Tucson, Arizona

Liberal Judaism in Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have just returned from another trip to Israel, and it seems to me that Rabbi Weiner (and you) went through a lot of trouble to determine that there is no basis for even the title of his two articles, "The Liberal Religious Impulse in Israel." It just ain't. Religion is the *last* thing you hear Israelis talk about.

The very plain fact is that there is in this country—let alone in Israel—hardly any belief or commitment attached to membership in a temple. This is a social convenience in a country which encourages "liberal religion" and frowns on religious indifference. To be comfortable one must be not only against sin but for religion, as well. . . .

In Israel there is no environmental pressure to conform to liberal Protestantism, hence no soil for the growth of liberal Judaism. . . . Essentially, neither we nor they are concerned with religion as a factor in daily life, and the difference one finds is merely a different expression of the desire to conform to prevailing social ideals.

JACOB B. SHOHAN
West Orange, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I commend you for the excellent subtitle you attached to Rabbi Weiner's article (July and August) on religion in Israel? The words: "An American Rabbi 'Spies Out the Land'" aptly describes the same type of report which Weiner's forebears, the ten false spies of Biblical days, brought back with them from a similar jaunt. Weiner's report reveals more about Weiner than it does about Israel. If this be the type of emissary which the Reform movement is thinking of having become its representative in Israel, so much the worse for Liberal Judaism. COMMENTARY has been wailing year in and year out that the Israelis have somehow come by an absurd view of what Jewish life is in this country; and yet it goes out of its way to publicize distortions about life in Israel, expecting that Americans will have a clearer idea of what goes on in the Jewish state from Weiner's superficial report.

The gist of Weiner's piece is that much spadework has to be done to get a Reform movement started in Israel. That is certainly true enough. However, one may well question why it has taken the Reform group until now—fifty years after the founding of Zionism and seven years after the establishment of the state—to start thinking in term of religious pioneering. Perhaps the reason can be found in a remark made last year by Rabbi Julius Mark at the forum in New York dealing with the theme of religion in Israel. For a group which started with the pioneering zeal of an Isaac M. Wise, it is a revealing statement: "The Union of American Hebrew Congregations in cooperation with the Central Conference of American Rabbis," stated Rabbi Mark, "has for several years been attempting to find an American-trained Liberal Rabbi possessing the necessary qualifications of scholarship and idealism who would be willing to settle in Israel to carry on this work. Applicants have not been wanting, but this far they have either been men who are not suited to do the job or well-qualified rabbis who are willing to spend a year or two in Israel. Ben Gurion had a point when he chided American Zionists for not wishing to settle in Israel." . . .

Most shocking of all in Weiner's piece was his report of his meeting with a blonde from Canada who exhorted him to do something about "saving Israel from being drowned by the niggers." This is grist for Elmer Berger's mill! Weiner is conveying the impression that a sizable number of people share this attitude; yet I was in Israel for over four years and I heard that comment only once and that from a neurotic. However, to the uninformed American reader, here is an "expert" implying that there is a serious racial problem in Israel.

It is quite possible that a Liberal Judaism will some day come to Israel. Certainly the country could stand it. But it will not be brought by those who wax indignant from afar and air distorted accounts in periodicals whose ideology clearly precludes them from

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printing anything positive about the Jewish state. Let those who would save the souls of the "poor Israeli natives" look first to see whether their own spiritual houses are in order. It may well be that the reason so many Israelis look suspiciously at the American brand of Judaism is because so pitifully few religious adherents possess a sincere belief in God—as Weiner acknowledges—and still fewer allow religion to influence the moral texture of their day-to-day lives.

The question of saving souls can be summed up in a quotation which is, no doubt, familiar to Rabbi Weiner: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considereth not the beam that is in thine own? For how wilst thou say to thy brother: let me pull out the mote of thine eye, and, behold, a beam is in thine own!"

ELIEZER WHARTMAN

New York City

RABBI WEINER *writes:*

There is only one point in Mr. Whartman's abusive letter to which I need reply. The rest of his grievances concern the remarks of another rabbi, or thoughts which are not in my article and are indeed quite the opposite of my own ideas. The one complaint specifically offered by Mr. Whartman as reason for his anger concerns the remark of a lady about the effect of the large Oriental immigration on Israel's cultural standards. Of course, there is no necessary implication whatsoever that any of the numerous individual opinions recorded in my report are shared by "a sizable number of people." Yet there is rather glory than disgrace in the fact that, next to security, Israel's most important problem (publicly proclaimed as such by Israeli leaders who are quite "positive" toward their own state) is its variegated population. Mr. Whartman should credit people with understanding that the juxtaposition of so many ethnic groups in so small a state cannot but make for tensions.

As to the "distortions" of the article, Mr. Whartman mentions none, but instead confuses his charge with the remark that "the gist of Weiner's piece . . . is certainly true enough." Nor, of course, is there the slightest indication in my report of any desire on the part of Liberal Judaism to "save souls" in Israel, or any feeling that our spiritual largesse in America is so ample that we want to share it with Israeli Jews. Whatever the reasons for Mr. Whartman's anger, they should not have prevented him from perceiving that the burden of my report is plainly the opposite of what he thinks he read. Not the possible influence of American Judaism on Israelis, but the decisive effect of Israel's religious condition on Jewish life here, is my main thesis. And not the desire of Liberal Judaism here to "teach Torah" to Israel, but the clear realization that Israel's Judaism must be an indigenous product, and that both communities while searching for meaningful forms might profit from a mutually enriching dialogue, is the point made several times in my article.

Whartman's final quotation reminds me of a story told by the Dubner Maggid about himself. Somebody once asked him how he always managed to find the quotation or parable which precisely fitted the point of his sermon. He answered with a parable and told of a boy who always seemed to score a bull's-eye when shooting his arrows. One day he observed the boy at target practice—saw him shoot an arrow, then come forward and draw a bull's-eye around the spot where the arrow landed.

Well, Mr. Whartman is in possession of a quotation, and obviously has some strong feelings that he is eager to express about Liberal Judaism and COMMENTARY. Unfortunately, the ideas expressed in my article have nothing to do with his aim.

Correction

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I call your attention to an error appearing in your September issue? The article in the "Cedars of Lebanon" contained a prefatory note which stated that the story of the Binding of Isaac is the Scriptural reading for the Yom Kippur morning service. Now in my synagogue this selection from the Torah is read during the morning service of the second day of Rosh Hashanah. . . . Fortunately another article in your same issue ["The Birthday of the World"] does place the reading of this portion in its proper setting.

HARRY BERKOWITZ

Camden, New Jersey

[Several other readers also called our attention to this error.—ED.]

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

The Pleasures of Maturity

THE END OF INNOCENCE: ESSAYS ON CULTURE AND POLITICS. By LESLIE FIEDLER. Beacon Press. 210 pp. $3.50 (paper, $1.25).

Reviewed by PAUL PICKREL

THE subject of Leslie Fiedler's fine first volume of essays is the necessity of self-confrontation. The implicit argument that underlies the book runs something like this: the American as an individual and Americans as a nation try to reject the complexity of experience and their complicity in it by prolonging indefinitely the innocence of immaturity; but what they really achieve by this process is a self-deception that makes it painful or impossible for them to live in the real world and deal with the real issues of their lives—political, sexual, religious, and so on. We are blinkered by innocence, the direction of Fiedler's argument suggests, as long as we see ourselves in the same way we see the cast in a Western film: the good men all on one side (ours, of course), the bad men on the other. Innocence ends only when we stand like Oedipus in the great recognition scene and realize that the villain we have sought is ourselves: the man in the mirror.

The central scene in Fiedler's book is Hiss before the Un-American Activities Committee. Before the evidence of his complicity, Hiss refused to accept Oedipus' tragic burden of self-knowledge; he continued to maintain his innocence. Hiss with his lawyers looked everywhere—at the typewriter, at the old Ford, at Freud—but he never looked at the one place needful, the mirror; he never confronted himself. The melodrama was played through to the end, but there was no tragedy.

In its broad outlines this diagnosis of what is wrong with us is not very new. But for various reasons in Fiedler's hands it is fresh and telling. For one thing, Fiedler is one of those happy critics of society who can tell us we are sick without being sickly about it. He can even call himself a sinner without claiming anything very spectacular in the sinning line as his own. He maintains his moral vigor in the face of the complexity of life; the fact that good and evil are hopelessly mixed in all men and measures does not mean for him that all men and measures are hopeless.

Another reason for the freshness of Fiedler's diagnosis is his method. In the Preface to *The End of Innocence* he says that he has attempted to extend to politics the technique of "close reading" developed in recent literary criticism. That is accurate enough, but it does not capture the essence of his approach. Actually Fiedler is fascinated by the power and the penalties that accrue to the human mind because of its propensity for carrying on its business by means of images, and his method follows from that fascination.

Such an essay as "Montana, or the End of Jean-Jacques Rousseau" reveals his conviction that the human mind craves images, and he amusingly recounts the various ways in which people in a terrifyingly empty land have tried to domesticate their environment through making it conform to one image or another—the picturesque of European romanticism, the melodrama of the Western movie, the faked past of commercialized Pioneer Days and rodeos.

We need images, then, but it makes a good deal of difference what kind of images we get. Though Fiedler doesn't say this, presumably he would agree that the power of an image lies in its ability to reflect complexity; a metaphor is a yoking of opposites, as the soul of man is a yoking of opposites. But the image can go hard, jell into opacity, and eclipse reality. So Fiedler's mind moves in two directions in these essays; he seeks to discover images that reveal (as in the Hiss scene), and he seeks to destroy images that obscure (as in the brilliant bonfire he makes of various masquerade costumes devised for Walt Whitman).

THERE are two main kinds of images Fiedler deals with. One is the stereotype—the image

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—HARRY A. OVERSTREET, *in the Foreword*

that is no image, the substitution of machine fabrication for organic relationship, which appeals to that part of us that causes our juices to flow when the bell rings. Then there is the archetype, which (to simplify Fiedler's own definition) is an image containing a submerged shared truth, which we render in art and enact in life but do not analyze because analysis demands confrontation. One is unreal but widely recognized; the other is real but unrecognized.

Fiedler is never better than when he is destroying stereotypes. In his essay on the Rosenbergs he shows how for some Americans and many Europeans the real Rosenberg case was replaced by another and very different trial—a stereotype of the proud fighter for social justice martyred for his convictions before a reactionary court. In this stereotype the Rosenbergs fall in at the tail of the procession that includes Dreyfus and Tom Mooney and Sacco and Vanzetti. By skillfully playing the facts against the stereotype, Fiedler shows that they have no place in that line, though he believes, on grounds which will seem to some readers sentimental, that in this instance mercy should have tempered justice.

In the essay on Whitman, Fiedler achieves his greatest success. His attack on the stereotypes of Whitman is wonderfully learned, and yet the learning is so apt, so light-hearted, so good-humored, so utterly unpretentious that the reader cannot believe that he has seen in these swift pages the utter demolition of almost everything he has ever read *about* Whitman, and the construction of a new poet who corresponds to the best of what he has read *in* Whitman. It is an extraordinary feat.

WHEN Fiedler turns from destroying stereotypes to finding his own images—uncovering archetypes—the results are less uniformly successful but no less uniformly stimulating.

The essay on Hiss and Chambers is an example. Here Fiedler relates the two men to their Communist archetypes: Chambers, the anti-bourgeois romantic revolutionist of the Communist "Third Period" in the 20's, a Bolshevik and proud of it, with his name and words plastered over the Communist press, a bohemian; and Hiss, the smooth bourgeois opportunist of the Popular Front 30's who did not even read the Communist press, making his successful best of both possible worlds:

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Chambers capable of acknowledging his complicity and facing the world with all his sins upon him, and Hiss playing the innocent All-American boy to the end.

It may be possible now to think that Fiedler sacrifices some of the particularity of his figures in his desire to establish their archetypes, that he tells us more, for instance, about the *kind* of man Hiss *represents* than the *man* he *is*. But if that is a criticism of Fiedler's analysis, it is a criticism the analysis has freed us to make. The essay first appeared in these pages nearly five years ago, and for many of us who read it then it has become so much a part of what we think about Hiss and Chambers that we now suppose we knew it all along.

In a quite different sort of essay—"Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!"—Fiedler traces through a number of American writers—Dana, Cooper, Melville, Mark Twain—an archetypal pattern of innocent love between a light-skinned man and a dark-skinned man. This is an ingenious and entertaining essay, but the reader need not take it quite as seriously as the author does. The device of using two contrasting figures of the same sex runs through the novel from Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Christian and Faithful, Robinson Crusoe and Friday, Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams, and so on. In the 19th-century English novel the figures are usually female: Rebecca and Rowena, Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley, on to *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Women in Love*. In *Ulysses* they are again men. It is true that in English fiction neither of the companions is dark-skinned, because England has few dark-skinned people, but when the English novel moves out into the empire where dark skins are available we find a pattern not unlike the one Fiedler thinks typically American: *A Passage to India* ends with the Englishman Fielding attempting to embrace the Indian Aziz. "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine."

Of the essays involving archetypes, the most permanently satisfying is "Roman Holiday," which reveals Fiedler in search of his own archetype, the Jew. This is an unpretentious descriptive account of how one American Jewish family tried to keep the Passover in Rome. In a sense it makes no point; it certainly advances no argument. It simply reveals by a skillful choice of detail what it can mean to participate, at however many removes and however obscurely, in one kind of shared truth.

Fiedler is sometimes too ready to categorize. It is remarkable how everything in his essays appears by twos—there are two Rosenberg cases, two guides for Americans in Italy (Hawthorne and Twain), two Americas for Italians (represented by literature and government agencies); F. Scott Fitzgerald had a double image of himself; McCarthy is a double man; there are not only two McCarthys but two legendary McCarthys—in fact, McCarthy goes on dividing like an amoeba in the course of the essay of which he is the subject. Even Walt Whitman has two (figurative) wives, though later he is saved for metaphoric monogamy. All this doubleness is natural enough in essays that are dialogues between reality and image, but its cumulative effect is to suggest the loss of some of the vagaries of life for the sake of rhetorical neatness.

But this minor cavil should not obscure Fiedler's greatest gift—his gift for demonstrating, not by argument but by the very way he goes after a subject, that to embrace the tragic view of life is not to lose the joy of life, that to the mature man the world offers pleasures closed to innocence. Fiedler's style is completely free of the mouldy vicarage manner; he doesn't even call T. S. Eliot Mr. Eliot. Nor does he write as if civilization couldn't possibly survive him and he had to write a will consigning its effects into worthy hands. His brashness, his frank and open egoism, save him from parsimony and waspishness. He conveys the feeling that reading a book can be a pleasure, that for all its complexity he finds life immensely enjoyable.

The Integrity of Torah

THE SPIRIT OF JEWISH LAW. By GEORGE HOROWITZ. Central Book Company. 812 pp. $12.50.

Reviewed by EMANUEL RACKMAN

INTEREST in Jewish law continues to mount. With the establishment of Israel, many Zionists are pondering the viability of historic Jewish jurispudence in a modern state. In America, the basic differences between Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism turn principally around their position on Jewish law. Even non-Jewish historians of legal and political theory are growing more curious; Hegel's view that the early Asiatic peoples had no aptitude for

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legal and political thought is being seen for the drastic simplification it is.

George Horowitz's one-volume handbook on Jewish civil and criminal law is a recent contribution to the subject. A practicing lawyer himself, and writing as it would appear for lawyers, he deals mainly with family law, torts, contracts, property, inheritance, and crime; the major part of the Halachah, concerning ritual and ceremonial observances, festivals, dietary laws, sacrificial offerings, the laws of agriculture and animal husbandry, the laws of purity, etc., is omitted from the scope of his study.

Mr. Horowitz deserves credit for the considerable research he has done, and for his organization of the materials, which was as formidable a task as the research. But the book is apologetic, and for this reason too often misses the spirit of Jewish law at which it aims; indeed, its limitation to civil and criminal law precludes any possibility of grasping that spirit.

Undertaking to defend "Rabbinism" against Christian vilification, Mr. Horowitz cites a number of rules to show how the humanity of the Rabbis prompted them to suspend apparently harsh or cruel Biblical laws. The Rabbis presumably did for the Bible what the disciples of Jesus did—together they saved us from the Old Testament fury! But to defend Rabbinism at the expense of the Bible is to forfeit more than one gains. For the Oral Tradition does not *abrogate* the Written Law, it *fulfills* it, and therein lies the spirit of Judaism.

I cite one example. The Bible provides for the "trial by ordeal" of a woman accused by her husband of secretly meeting with a paramour. The suspected adulteress is brought before a priest who gives her a potion consisting of water in which there has been placed a piece of parchment inscribed with God's name. If she is guilty, her erogenous areas swell and betray her; if innocent, nothing happens. Mr. Horowitz thinks the Rabbis acted to suspend this ordeal by requiring the husband, too, to be chaste before a wife might be subjected to it. As the Rabbi who instituted this revision was a contemporary of Paul, one might say that the two together rescued adulteresses from Biblical brutality!

But how did the Rabbis understand the ordeal as described in the Book of Numbers? First, they saw the Torah as instituting a legal

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The Greater Part

. . . "History consists, for the greater part, of the miseries brought upon the world by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy, ungoverned zeal, and all the train of disorderly appetites, which shake the public with the same

'troublous storms that toss
The private state, and render life unsweet.'

"These vices are the causes of those storms. Religion, morals, laws, prerogatives, privileges, liberties, rights of men, are the pretexts. The pretexts are always found in some specious appearance of a real good. You would not secure men from tyranny and sedition by rooting out of the mind the principles to which these fraudulent pretexts apply. If you did, you would root out everything that is valuable in the human breast. . . . Wise men will apply their remedies to vices, not to names—to the causes of evil, which are permanent, not to the occasional organs by which they act, and the transitory modes in which they appear.

"In some people I see great liberty, indeed; in many, if not in the most, an oppressive, degrading servitude. But what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.

. . . "to form a free government, that is to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind."

"Reflections on the Revolution
in France, 1790"
Edmund Burke

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process to forestall and prevent the killing of wives and alleged paramours in the name of a higher law—the Torah ordered the cause brought before the priest. Second, the Rabbis saw the Biblical command as intended to allay the husband's suspicions and thereby restore domestic tranquillity. This is made abundantly clear when the Talmud likens the "ordeal of jealousy" to the "ordeal of oath," which played an important part in Jewish law generally. Unlike the ordeal of oath in other legal systems, the Bible provided for the oath only as a means to *clear* a defendant. When the plaintiff's proof was inadequate, but sufficient to create suspicion, the defendant could clear himself by taking an oath. In the case of the "ordeal of jealousy," the wife, when brought to the priest, was urged, if she were guilty, to confess. Then if her husband divorced her, she forfeited only her property rights. If guilty, she would indeed confess—so awesome were the waters of bitterness and the accompanying oath made to appear. However, if she were innocent she had nothing to fear, and by drinking the waters she would be restored to her husband with God vouchsafing for her fidelity.

In fact, the ordeal was rarely administered, and long before the Christian Era it was suspended. Husbands apparently had become more civilized. However, the "spirit" that Mr. Horowitz misses altogether, we find in the concern of Jewish law with the ability of the wife to clear herself of unfounded suspicions.

In any case, Mr. Horowitz cannot defend Rabbinism against Christian depreciation in a book that does not deal with ritual observance, for it is in connection with these laws that Christians have made their chief attack on the Pharisees. To achieve his goal, Mr. Horowitz would have needed, for example, to explain how the legalistic approach to the Sabbath did not destroy the physical and philosophical value of the day; or how "legalism" did not subvert the devotional character of prayer; or how the detailed prescriptions with regard to sacrificial offerings induced spiritual living.

Mr. Horowitz's self-imposed limitation of his work to civil law makes it almost impossible to present even a Jewish philosophy of property, despite the fact that the bulk of the book deals with property law. Such a philosophy would require a much more exhaustive analysis of the institution of the Sabbatical year, which Mr. Horowitz treats meagerly because it relates more to religious than to civil law. However, to understand the Jewish insistence on ultimate ownership's being vested only in God, man's role being restricted to use and not dominion, requires, at minimum, not only a study of the three tractates of Talmud most quoted by Mr. Horowitz (the *Babas*), but also the tractates pertaining to vows, the Sabbath, the Sabbatical year, and the ritualistic "uncleanness" of things—so far afield must one go from civil law in order to arrive at the "spirit" of Jewish law with respect to the nature and justification of property. The only section concerned with property in which one glimpses the spirit of Jewish law is where Mr. Horowitz, flouting his own limitation, digresses to discuss a Jew's obligations to the poor.

Grasping the spirit of Jewish law often requires not only mastery of the entire corpus of the tradition, but also of its dialectic. For example, the Deuteronomic "Law of the Beautiful Captive" provided that if a soldier should take a woman captive, he might, under certain circumstances, and after a compulsory waiting period, marry her. Superficially, it would appear, as Mr. Horowitz suggests, that the law was intended to prevent licentiousness and rape on the battlefield. But Talmudic sources show that the law chiefly aimed at preventing religious fanatics from killing lustful soldiers. By permitting soldiers to marry captive women, the Torah deprived fanatics of a pretext for indulging their zeal. The Law thus sought to balance two interests—the protection of chastity, and also of its own due process.

Mr. Horowitz gives almost no account of the divergence of opinion that is to be found in the Talmud with respect to almost every problem. This, too, is a bar to one's grasp of the spirit of the Law's development. It is not correct, for example, to assume that the authorities favored the freeing of Gentile slaves; while there is some support for that, there is also evidence of opposition to the manumission of Gentile slaves, as it automatically transformed the slave (who already had partial status as a Jew) into a full-fledged Jew, and Jews did not crave this increase in their numbers. Mr. Horowitz, as a liberal, is apparently troubled by some of the Talmudic attitudes towards non-Jews.

A system of jurispudence that is theocentric develops along altogether different lines from one that is rooted only in history. Its amending

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procedures are usually slower, but its ethical insights are often bolder and more profound. Adequately to elucidate the spirit of Jewish law requires the integration of all its parts, its theology and ritual with its civil and public law. Mr. Horowitz has not done this; but he has assembled a great deal of material that may help comparative analysis.

One more word. Mr. Horowitz's appendices and indices merit special commendation. If only more writers on the subject—particularly Hebrew writers—followed his example!

Postwar France

FRANCE AGAINST HERSELF. By HERBERT LUETHY. Praeger. 475 pp. $6.50.

Reviewed by G. L. ARNOLD

WHEN so able a writer as Herbert Luethy deals at length with so important a topic as France's position in the modern world, the resulting work has to be taken seriously. This is all the more true since the picture Luethy draws is one that fits the self-critical mood in which the French elite has lived since the liberation. It is therefore paying both the book and the author a compliment to say that it stimulates not only admiration but criticism: admiration for its brilliance, criticism on account of its lopsided treatment of some key issues and its relative neglect of features that do not fit the central theme.

The theme is one with which people in the West, but above all the French themselves, have been made familiar since 1940 by a succession of shocks to France's position in the world, and the consequent burst of national self-criticism: France has since the First World War failed to adapt successfully to the conditions of a changing environment, and the resulting petrifaction of the social structure is now an obstacle to the radical reforms needed to bring the country into line with its more advanced neighbors. This analysis is of course the essence of "Mendès-Franceism," which in turn is a reformulation of one aspect of the Resistance credo. In a sense the French have been talking about nothing else since the debacle of 1940, and Luethy's book sums up for the outside world some of the harsher and more pessimistic things that Frenchmen have said and written during the past decade and a half. For the French are very good at rending one another, both literally and metaphorically, and all the bitter remarks now current about their politics, their economics, and their culture, have been substantially culled from their own national self-examination.

This point is worth making for the non-European reader to whom the flavor of Luethy's analysis must seem a little exotic. Luethy himself of course is Swiss (Swiss-German Protestant, to be exact; this too is not irrelevant), and his countrymen are close enough both to France and to their own French-speaking fellow citizens to be able to appreciate the sharp edge of his satire (rather muffled in the otherwise admirable translation) without taking his devastating indictment of French politics quite *au pied de la lettre*. Ruthless criticism of national faults has become a post-1945 habit in more than one European country. It is indeed one of the most trenchant weapons wielded by the reformers; for that very reason it should not be confused with the kind of purely analytical writing exemplified by Mr. Philip Williams's masterly *Politics in Post-War France*. Mr. Williams, although an Oxford don, is far from being politically neutral, but his main concern is with a scientific dissection of his subject matter. By contrast, Luethy's brilliant essay is essentially a massive pamphlet hurled at the defenders of the *status quo* and the parasites who profit from it. The student who wants to know what has been happening in France since 1945 is advised to consult Mr. Williams. The reader who needs no factual information and is in search of a polemical summing up which will confirm his own suspicion that there is something rotten in the state of France, can do no better than turn to Luethy.

He will, however, have to do some mental work. Luethy, himself a historian as well as a polemical essayist of a high order, takes it for granted that his readers need no information of the kind that can be found in textbooks. He is as intent on generalizing as ever Tocqueville was; indeed, Tocqueville is clearly his master. Whether this is the highest praise that can be bestowed upon a political writer must be a matter of opinion. It is possible to feel that this peculiarly French kind of writing is no longer quite adequate even to a relatively old-fashioned country such as France. There is perhaps some irony in the fact that so sharp a critic of French traditionalism as Luethy should have succumbed to the temptation of

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This *I Believe*

Albert Schweitzer*

"As one who tries to remain youthful in his thinking and feeling, I have struggled against facts and experience on behalf of belief in the good and the true. At the present time when violence, clothed in life, dominates the world more cruelly than it ever has before, I still remain convinced that truth, love, peaceableness, meekness, and kindness are the violence which can master all other violence. The world will be theirs as soon as ever a sufficient number of men with purity of heart, with strength, and with perseverance, think and live out the thoughts of love and truth, of meekness and peaceableness."

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*"Memoirs of Childhood and Youth"
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writing the kind of essay that hardly anyone but a Frenchman would think of producing in the year 1955.

THIS point can be exemplified by turning to some of his judgments. He has a very impressive opening section on the bureaucratic structure of government and on the way in which administrative sclerosis has traditionally hampered both reform at the center and self-government in the provinces. This too is in the tradition of French self-criticism. He then proceeds to take various public institutions apart, starting with the venerable Council of State which emerges in his treatment as a kind of Star Chamber where aged judges and irremovable officials, clad in moth-eaten ermine, impose their constipated outlook upon a helpless citizenry and a shiftless government.

"The courts grind more slowly and more inscrutably than the mills of God, and sometimes when there is a *cause célèbre* and a great tournament of legal eloquence takes place, they work in the full glare of publicity, with the result that the great lawyers vie in public esteem with the stars of literature, the stage and the cinema. But the supreme luminaries who control the state itself, its legislation, its finances, and its personal politics, are totally removed from the eyes of the profane, and no breath of air disturbs the venerable dust of centuries that has gathered about them. The Conseil d'Etat will unhesitatingly interpret a law newly passed by the National Assembly in the light of decrees or regulations issued by Francis I or Louis XIII, and use the final and authoritative construction thus put upon it to pour back the new wine into the old bottles of an archaic jurisprudence."

Who would suspect from this eloquent passage that the *Conseil d'Etat* is the despairing envy of the liberal and up-to-date British lawyers who have studied its workings since the war, and that in their considered opinion this famous old administrative tribunal protects the French citizen against official arbitrariness and mismanagement far better than any of the corresponding institutions in Britain?

Again, Luethy's gift for satire tends to run away with him when he comes to deal with the complicated story of French politics since the Liberation. In an epilogue to the revised edition of his book, penned eighteen months after the bulk of it was written, he feels obliged to note that the summer of 1953 was in all probability the lowest point touched by France since the war, and that there has since then been a surprising recovery. But a polemical tract originally prepared for publication during this bleak period inevitably overdoes the pessimism then fashionable in Paris. Needless to say, this does not mean that any of the structural faults have been corrected. All that has happened is that they have been brought to the attention of an aroused public, at a moment when that public was beginning to shake off the postwar numbness, amounting almost to shell-shock, which had gripped it after the brief excitement of the Liberation. In this respect the North African crisis seems to have acted as a catalyst. If it destroyed the short-lived Mendès-France administration, it also galvanized its successor.

IT WOULD have done no harm if Luethy had draped the garment of his graceful style around a skeleton of hard factual information, however summary. He does indeed mention the

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postwar reconstruction plans (which were actually carried out), but gives no precise indication of their material extent, which was considerable. He refers briefly to the nationalized industries as a part of the public domain which could easily be taken over by the state because its management had always been bureaucratic anyhow, "and the only reason why it is so easy to discredit the performance of the industries concerned is that no one seems to remember the state of decay, bureaucratic sclerosis, and chronic deficit borne by public funds in which they were left by their private beneficiaries." Who would infer from this contemptuous aside that the French mining industry is now, in terms of output per manshift, the most efficient in Continental Europe, that the same is true of the railways, and that electricity output has more than doubled since nationalization? The British citizen in particular who reads that in the French coal mines "output a man overall is now 13 percent above the best before the war, and for all underground workers is 23 percent better than before the war" (The London *Times,* August 3), whereas in Britain the corresponding improvement has been about 6 per cent, can only grit his teeth in envy as he contemplates the mounting coal bill weighing upon the hard-pressed industries of his own country. Perhaps the talk about France being a backward country has, after all, been a little overdone in the interest of political therapy.

This is not to say that the picture which Luethy paints is substantially inaccurate. It is unfortunately only too true. If it strikes at least one British reader as lopsided, the reason is that the author has unconsciously taken for granted those positive features of his environment which strike every traveler who crosses the Channel from Dover to Calais: above all the sheer physical vitality of the French people, their capacity both for hard work and enjoyment, their mental agility, the color and many-sidedness of their existence, and not least the ruthlessness of their national self-examination, compared with the foggy complacency of their British neighbors. Towards the end Luethy is constrained to observe that the hard shell of French stagnation is beginning to crack under the impact of regenerative processes already visible in a higher birth rate and a mounting curve of production, and he makes the point that if these processes are allowed to work themselves out, France will be a very different country within a decade or so. Perhaps there is some advantage in being sufficiently "underdeveloped" to leave a margin for further growth in the second half of this crowded century.

Gracious Money-Making

ALWAYS IN VOGUE. By EDNA WOOLMAN CHASE and ILKA CHASE. Doubleday. 381 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by ISA KAPP

IF YOU are only casting a covetous eye at the Scotch tweeds, Paris cloches, and proud bearings that parade through an issue of *Vogue* magazine, you may believe that you have entered a woman's world of privilege and taste, where the feminine graces ride high as ladies step crisp and cheerful into suburban days, slim and intimate into city nights. But if you are peering methodically through its bulk of ads in search of a spring dress, you begin to shift uneasily in front of the hollow cheeks and zombie stares of the *Vogue* models, and to feel the generally chilly atmosphere of this publication. As its pages offer up bosoms disrupted by military pleats and swooping folds, stomachs disguised by sudden pockets, folds and drapings, you fear that the designing Diors, Molyneuxs, and Patous cherish some deep-rooted animus against the natural lines of a woman's figure. These uncertainties are all cleared up in the autobiography of *Vogue's* editor, Edna Woolman Chase, written with entire candor and strong self-righteousness by herself and her daughter, Ilka Chase. It turns out that *Vogue* has nothing against women, it simply recognizes that their welfare and good looks must recede before the high principles of commercial enterprise: the inspirational sales idea, the all-out effort to *produce,* and the nasty dig for anyone misguided enough to leave the fold.

Mrs. Chase (then Edna Martin) joined *Vogue's* staff in 1895 when she was eighteen and it was mainly a small society journal with fashion pointers. She turned out more envelopes with subscription forms than anyone else in the circulation department, soon was entrusted with layouts, and steadily plodded her way up the managerial ladder until she was editor-in-chief of the American, French, British, and (short-lived) German *Vogues.* During its early years, *Vogue* developed from a gazette of social activities into a large-scale fashion magazine and

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shopping guide for women. When Condé Nast took over in 1909, he built its circulation policy on what he called its appeal to people with taste and money, and the magazine sported expensive things on expensive ladies. Profits were based on moderate circulation but a high value of advertising space, and the tone switched from gossipy provincial to authoritative, setting $155 dress styles for millionaires and $40 approximations for those less well-heeled readers whom the magazine coyly calls "Nillionairesses." Throughout this expansion, Mrs. Chase remained firmly entrenched. In 1928 Nast offered her a gift of $100,000 toward the "embroidery" of her Long Island home, in gratitude for her having helped him to become a rich man.

Describing the gulf she felt between herself and her non-professional friends once she was secure in her job, Mrs. Chase adds, in the firm way she seems to take pride in: "I couldn't talk to them about *Vogue,* and when you came right down to it, what else of real interest was there?" Though business is pleasure and even romance for many people in America, and there is nothing particularly unwholesome in this situation, Mrs. Chase's iron, humorless dedication to the values as well as the profits of business has operated like the efficient drop of a venetian blind, blotting out without ceremony or regret the uncompetitive world that treasures its leisure as much as its labor. On one occasion when she is defending *Vogue* against Ralph Ingersoll's accusation that the magazine was a frivolous waste in a war period, she solemnly claims that *Vogue* was preserving the arts of civilized living, in which she includes opera, writing, and painting. But these aspects of civilization only come up when it is a matter of *Vogue's* honor or profit, and one can imagine that Mrs. Chase had little time or interest to spare for them. If for many people making money means living, for Mrs. Chase living is making money. It is not so much what money can buy that holds her in thrall, as what the work of getting it can do for you. The sense of involvement, the meetings, the contacts, the executive power—these are life. Marriage and divorce are mentioned only incidentally, even her own and her daughter's, and the only family that is real to her is the office family with its late hours, interdependence, and secretaries loyal until death.

Always in Vogue omits no tale of defection to a competing publication, and Mrs. Chase writes in what she believes is a sympathetic way about the photographer De Meyer, who left them for Hearst's *Harper's Bazaar.* He lived royally on the Continent until he was fired, then came back chastened to *Vogue,* but was considered unusable because he was now known as a "Bazaar personality," and finally came upon difficult days and died. "The news of his death saddened us," writes Mrs. Chase in memoriam, "for we had been fond of him. He and *Vogue* had been mutually helpful in the building of each other's prestige and his desire for more money was a natural one." In the same way, everyone is judged in terms of his relation to this flourishing organization, which was so much bigger than its members or their private lives. Describing two young women on the staff, Marie Lyons and Grace Hegger, who later married Sinclair Lewis, she mentions that "there was a great rivalry between them of which I was aware, but as it only stimulated them to greater efforts from which *Vogue* benefited, I ignored it."

Many celebrities flicker through this autobiography—Dorothy Parker, Edward Steichen, Clare Booth Luce—but somehow they do not shine much in the context of *Vogue's* daily schedules, although Mrs. Chase does her best to snag some reflected light from them. One thing can be said for her integrity: she does not believe that business people should toady to artists. There is a classic story about the time the magazine was running an Americana issue and it was decided that Thomas Wolfe would be a suitable contributor. Mrs. Chase invited him to the Cosmopolitan Club for tea at four. She was told that he would probably not show up until a quarter to six, and was advised to have her husband call for her at seven. The idea apparently was that an hour would be all she could bear of this erratic genius, who might do something unpredictable and tarnish her reputation at the Club. She tells us with great relief that this arrangement worked like a charm. Wolfe, though he slipped from tea to cocktails, did not take off his shirt (as was feared) or otherwise shame her, and *Vogue* printed his article.

It is always fun to read about people rich and powerful enough to make and break their own conventions, to imagine wealth magically opening doors, like the electronic devices in modern buildings. But *Vogue* takes its cue

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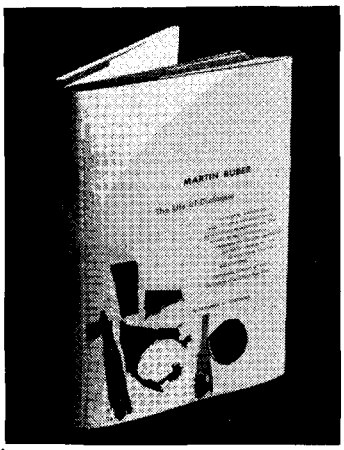

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from the gray and stilted rich who are confined to their own narrow corridors, and urges us to have our conventions, tastes, and hungers determined by such idols as filter through its pages. Does anyone really take seriously the *Vogue* image of gracious living: some sinuous lines and strings of pearls for a proper woman, some silver, pale pink and roses for a presentable table? I hope not, but Mrs. Chase can always point out with dignity that hundreds of thousands of loyal patrons are willing to pay fifty cents an issue to make sure they are always in vogue.

A Theory of Meaning

SOVEREIGN REASON. By ERNEST NAGEL. Free Press. 315 pp. $5.00.

Reviewed by LEWIS S. FEUER

PHILOSOPHY begins when human beings feel the necessity for stating the grounds for their basic life-decisions. Unlike science, a philosophy has to take a stand upon such questions as: Does God exist? Is human history fully determined by causal laws? Are there ethical laws which proceed from the human conscience? From time to time great thinkers like David Hume have held that ultimate questions are beyond human answers, and have urged people to content themselves with a tolerant skepticism. If a book of metaphysics comes your way, said Hume, "commit it then to the flames; for it contains nothing but sophistry and illusion." This philosophy, now known as empiricism, was that of a highly civilized man. Empiricism was not for Hume an academic stance; it was a way of life. Hume did the greater part of his work as a Tory historian, liberal economist, and scientific sociologist.

Logical positivism today is the academic scion of Hume's philosophy. It culminates in no ethical standpoint; in that sense, it is a negation of philosophy. It holds that ultimate questions are meaningless; science says whatever there is to say, and all else is nonsense. It regards the basis of political decision as "emotive," and therefore consigns to a common limbo all the varieties of political philosophy. Empiricists in the 19th century, John Stuart Mill, for example, had thought their philosophy would contribute to social wisdom. But modern positivism has a nihilist import. Its

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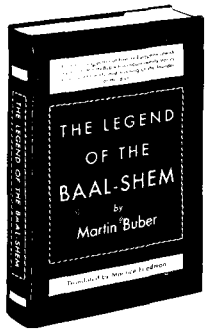

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method is "analysis," that is, demonstrating that philosophies arise from mere confusions of language. Political ideas, the existence of the external world, your friend's feelings, your own private feelings, all collapse into misuses of grammar; they cannot be spoken of significantly. The positivist outlook might be described as: "The World As a Grammatical Blunder."

But the academic positivist today cannot quite bring himself to commit the books of philosophy to the flames, as Hume advised. Instead, he prefers to continue to be indignant about them. In *Sovereign Reason,* Ernest Nagel presents us with the fruits of twenty-five years spent in tracking down the "meaningless."

Nagel's critical judgments are severe. He takes Whitehead to task for believing in God's patience, and demolishes Eddington's view that the laws of nature can be derived from pure reason. He finds "the bird of Minerva" absent from Russell's logical writings, and regards a belief (such as Einstein's) that science assumes the existence of a real external world as having "no cognitive worth." By contrast, he is curiously generous towards John Dewey, though Dewey's extensive writings are as filled with metaphysics as most of the books he belabors.

With the passage of years Nagel has tempered somewhat the earlier rigor of his views on meaninglessness. In 1933 he scolded Peirce for having said "that a bull and I feel much alike at the sight of a red flag." He wrote then: "Far be it from me to question this assertion, since I do not know what it means." Now this sentence is altered to say that "what it means is most obscure." But what the obscurity in Peirce's statement is I cannot see. I am reasonably sure that a bull has none of the feelings that surge in Khrushchev's breast on seeing a red flag. At the same time, opticians can tell how the perceptual qualities of a bull probably resemble ours. But Nagel, faithful to the positivist dogma, finds such statements meaningless or obscure because they say something about personal experiences. The imagination is truncated to conform to a "theory of meaning."

THE crux of the matter is that meaning-arguments as philosophers conduct them go round in a circle. The philosopher starts out by mak-

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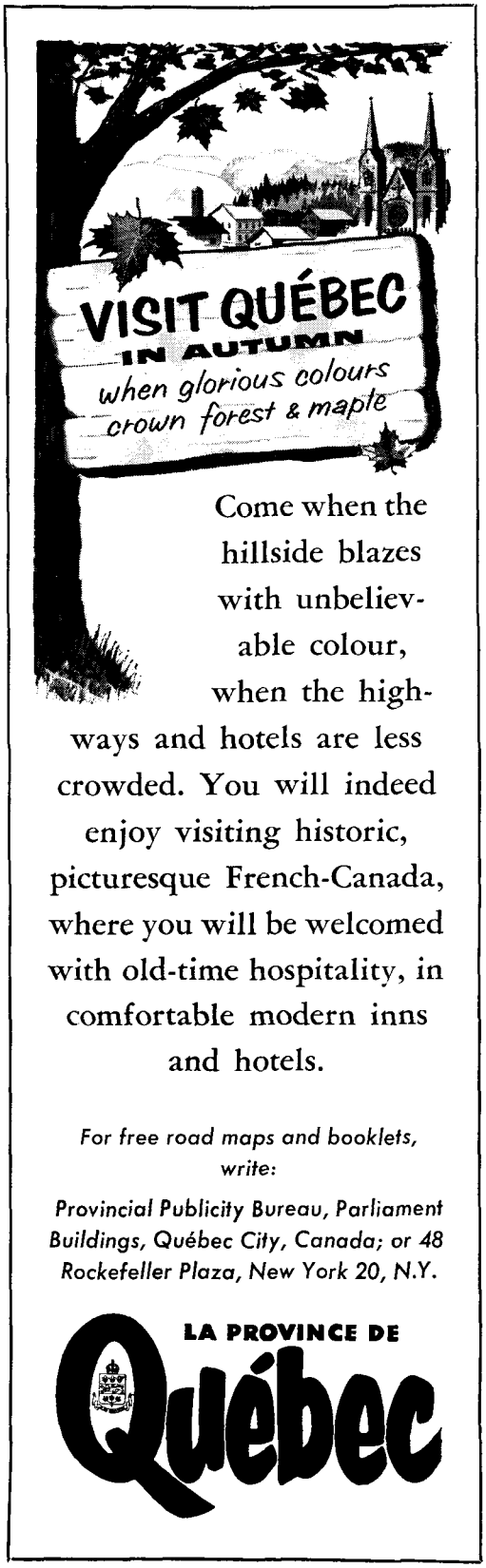
ing a non-logical decision as to what statements he shall regard as "meaningful." Then he defines the word to fit his cases. A person can define "meaningful" so that assertions about his own feelings, or others' feelings, or unperceived electrons, or infinite numbers, or gods, are meaningless. How shall we disprove a philosopher's theory of meaning? If we call attention to its consequences, that it makes some kind of statements meaningless, he replies that he intended just those consequences. Since there is no common ground as to which assertions are meaningful, we get lost in a relativity of meaning-decisions. Nagel's positivist restraints lead him to one decision. Are his criticisms of Russell and Peirce more than an elaboration of his own non-rational preferences? And if so, shouldn't his philosophy be more concerned with exploring the basis of his choices?

ERNEST NAGEL calls his philosophy "contextualistic naturalism." It holds, he says, "that the things most dear to mankind are brought into existence and are sustained in their functions by natural forces; and it therefore finds only a romantic sentimentalism in the conception according to which men are wanderers in an inherently hostile world. . . ." Nagel reveres natural forces in a Santayanan way as the sources of our being. But is it merely romantic to regard the world as an environment essentially indifferent or hostile to our wishes? The adjustment that children make to their anxiety about death is a painful resignation to hostile facts.

There is in Nagel's naturalism a component of self-immolation. It asks you to cultivate a kind of adoration of the impersonal forces that destroy human values infinitely more than they satisfy them. Indeed, Nagel seems to overlook the simple evil in natural forces. "The source and urgency of moral problems," he writes, is "the plurality of men's needs" and the limitations of their environment. But if this were all there were to it, we should all have had far happier days. There is also prejudice, hatred, and cruelty; even if men's needs were few, their aggressive propensities might make for insoluble moral problems.

"Contextualistic" is Nagel's multi-purpose word for resolving questions. It seems to change its significance as often as "dialectical" does among the Marxians. At one time, it means that a felt quality "is an objective constituent of nature," even though its existence depends on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physical events. At another time, it is a warning to be mindful of the "context of inquiry." No question is significant, says Nagel, unless it arises out of a context that fixes its sense; a "wholesale" problem, one that has no "identifiable context of inquiry," is devoid of significance. Nagel regards this standpoint as "America's most significant contribution to philosophic intelligence." This may help to explain why philosophers today count for almost nothing in American intellectual life. For philosophy's importance has been precisely its concern with "wholesale" problems. Academic positivism represses questions of ultimate decision and tries to invent a pseudo-discipline of "contexts of inquiry."

Nagel never explains how he can be both a naturalist and logical positivist at once. As a naturalist, he speaks of forces that exist apart from scientific inquiry. But in that case, what of the positivist criticism that such existences are unverifiable? Is his naturalism the outcome of a "context of inquiry," or is it an emotive decision? Nagel's work is always enriched by his wide reading in science. I doubt, however, whether reason is sovereign in his philosophy.

Book Reviewers in This Issue

Paul Pickrel is managing editor of the *Yale Review*.

Emanuel Rackman is rabbi of Congregation Shaaray Tefila in Far Rockway. His book *Israel's Emerging Constitution* was reviewed here last month.

G. L. Arnold's writings on international politics are well known to readers of Commentary. Dial Press will shortly bring out a book by him.

Isa Kapp's comment on new books appears often in this magazine.

Lewis S. Feuer teaches philosophy at the University of Vermont.

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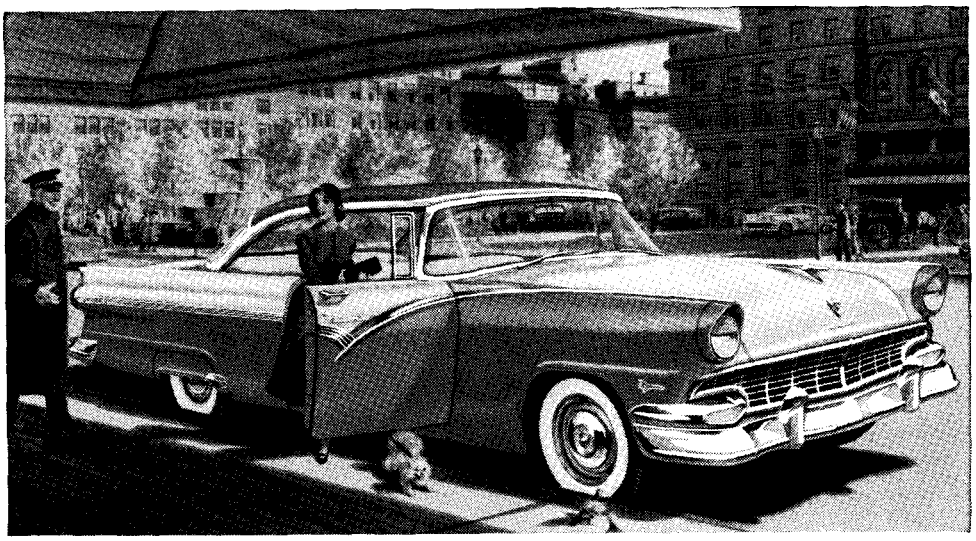

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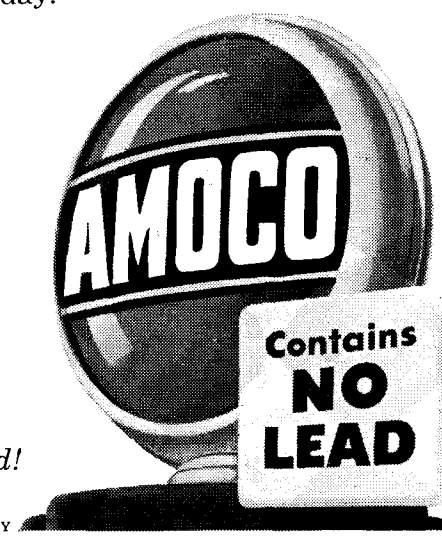

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